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The Enchanted Island

And Other Poems

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BY

ALFRED NOYES

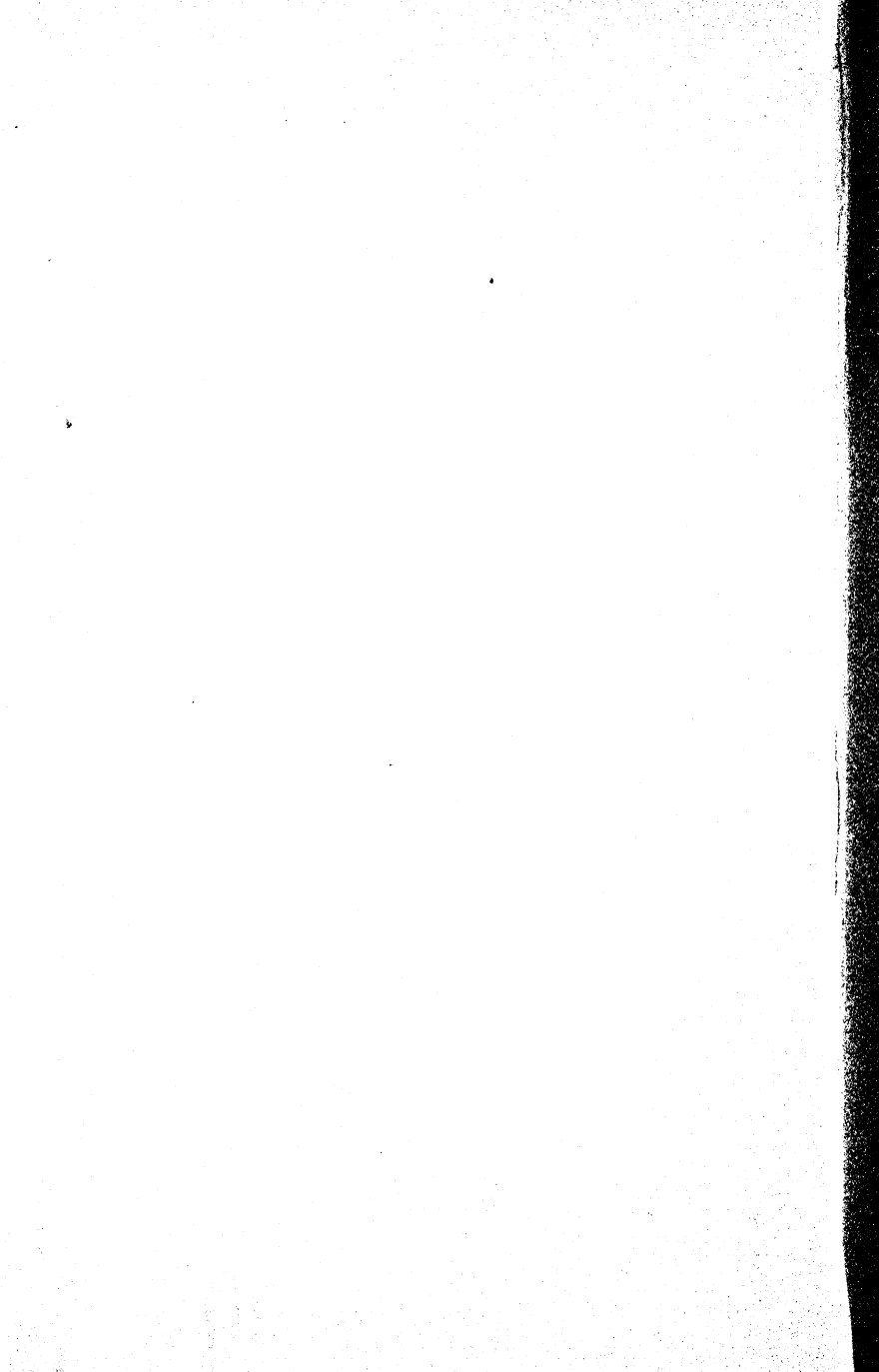
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A. N.



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POEMS.

MIST IN THE VALLEY.

I.

MIST in the valley, weeping mist
Beset my homeward way.
No gleam of rose or amethyst
Hallowed the parting day ;
A shroud, a shroud of awful gray
Wrapped every woodland brow,
And drooped in crumbling disarray
Around each wintry bough.

II.

And closer round me now it clung
Until I scarce could see
The stealthy pathway over-hung
By silent tree and tree

Which floated in that mystery
As—poised in waveless deeps—
Branching in worlds below the sea,
The gray sea-forest sleeps.

III.

Mist in the valley, mist no less
Within my groping mind !
The stile swam out : a wilderness
Rolled round it, gray and blind.
A yard in front, a yard behind,
So strait my world was grown,
I stooped to win once more some kind
Glimmer of twig or stone.

IV.

I crossed and lost the friendly stile
And listened. Never a sound
Came to me. Mile on mile on mile
It seemed the world around
Beneath some infinite sea lay drowned
With all that e'er drew breath ;
Whilst I, alone, had strangely found
A moment's life in death.

v.

A universe of lifeless gray
Oppressed me overhead.
Below, a yard of clinging clay
With rotting foliage red
Glimmered. The stillness of the dead,
Hark !—was it broken now
By the slow drip of tears that bled
From hidden heart or bough.

vi.

Mist in the valley, mist no less
That muffled every cry
Across the soul's gray wilderness
Where faith lay down to die ;
Buried beyond all hope was I,
Hope had no meaning there :
A yard above my head the sky
Could only mock at prayer.

vii.

Yet, though the corse of that dead God
Were bowed across the way,
Though, closer, closer, as I trod
My path of clinging clay,

All round me pressed the hideous gray
Corruption, till it seemed
To quench the last faint struggling ray
That in my spirit gleamed,

VIII.

E'en as I groped along, the gloom
Suddenly shook at my feet !
O, strangely as from a rending tomb
In resurrection, sweet
Swift wings tumultuously beat
Away ! I paused to hark—
O, birds of thought, too fair, too fleet
To follow across the dark !

IX.

Yet, like a madman's dream, there came
One fair swift flash to me
Of distances, of streets a-flame
With joy and agony,
And further yet, a moon-lit sea
Foaming across its bars,
And further yet, the infinity
Of wheeling suns and stars,

X.

And further yet . . . O, mist of suns,
I grope amidst your light,
O, further yet, what vast response
From what transcendent height?
Wild wings that burst thro' death's dim night
I can but pause and hark ;
For O, ye are too swift, too white,
To follow across the dark !

XI.

Mist in the valley, yet I saw,
And in my soul I knew
The gleaming City whence I draw
The strength that then I drew,
My misty pathway to pursue
With steady pulse and breath
Through these dim forest-ways of dew
And darkness, life and death.

A SONG OF THE PLOUGH.

I.

(Morning.)

Idle, comfortless, bare,

The broad bleak acres lie :

The ploughman guides the sharp plough-share
Steadily nigh.

The big plough-horses lift

And climb from the marge of the sea,

And the clouds of their breath on the clear wind drift
Over the fallow lea.

Streaming up with the yoke,

Brown as the sweet-smelling loam,

Thro' a sun-swept smother of sweat and smoke
The two great horses come.

Up thro' the raw cold morn

They trample and drag and swing ;

And my dreams are waving with ungrown corn
In a far-off spring.

It is my soul lies bare
Between the hills and the sea :
Come, ploughman Life, with thy sharp plough-
share,
And plough the field for me.

II.

(*Evening.*)

Over the darkening plain
As the stars regain the sky,
Steals the chime of an unseen rein
Steadily nigh.

Lost in the deepening red
The sea has forgotten the shore :
The great dark steeds with their muffled tread
Draw near once more.

To the furrow's end they sweep
Like a sombre wave of the sea,
Lifting its crest to challenge the deep
Hush of Eternity.

Still for a moment they stand,
Massed on the sun's red death,
A surge of bronze, too great, too grand,
To endure for more than a breath.

A SONG OF THE PLOUGH.

Only the billow and stream
Of muscle and flank and mane
Like darkling mountain-catáracts gleam
Gripped in a Titan's rein.

Once more from the furrow's end
They wheel to the fallow lea,
And down the muffled slope descend
To the sleeping sea.

And the fibrous knots of clay,
And the sun-dried clots of earth
Cleave, and the sunset cloaks the gray
Waste and the stony dearth !

O, broad and dusky and sweet,
The sunset covers the weald ;
But my dreams are waving with golden wheat
In a still strange field.

My soul, my soul lies bare,
Between the hills and the sea ;
Come, ploughman Death, with thy sharp plough-
share,
And plough the field for me.

THE BANNER.

Who in the gorgeous van-guard of the years
With wingéd helmet glistens, let him hold
Ere he pluck down this banner, crying "It bears
An old device"; for, though it seem the old,

It is the new! No rent shroud of the past,
But its transfigured spirit that still shines
Triumphantly before the foremost lines,
Even from the first prophesying the last.

And whoso dreams to pluck it down shall stand
Bewildered, while the great host thunders by;
And he shall show the rent shroud in his hand
And "lo, I lead the van!" he still shall cry;

While leagues away, the spirit-banner shines
Rushing in triumph before the foremost lines.

RANK AND FILE.

I.

DRUM-TAPS! Drum-taps! Who is it marching,
Marching past in the night? Ah, hark,
Draw your curtains aside and see
Endless ranks of the stars o'er-arching
Endless ranks of an army marching,
Marching out of the measureless dark,
Marching away to Eternity.

II.

See the gleam of the white sad faces
Moving steadily, row on row,
Marching away to their hopeless wars :
Drum-taps, drum-taps, where are they marching?
Terrible, beautiful, human faces,
Common as dirt, but softer than snow,
Coarser than clay, but calm as the stars.

III.

Is it the last rank readily, steadily
Swinging away to the unknown doom?
Ere you can think it, the drum-taps beat
Louder, and here they come marching, marching,
Great new level locked ranks of them readily
Steadily swinging out of the gloom,
Marching endlessly down the street.

IV.

Unregarded imperial regiments
White from the roaring intricate places
Deep in the maw of the world's machine,
Well content, they are marching, marching,
Unregarded imperial regiments,
Ay, and there are those terrible faces
Great world-heroes that might have been.

V.

Hints and facets of One—the Eternal,
Faces of grief, compassion and pain,
Faces of hunger, faces of stone,
Faces of love and of labour, marching,
Changing facets of One—the Eternal,
Streaming up thro' the wind and the rain,
All together and each alone.

VI.

You that doubt of the world's one Passion,
You for whose science the stars are a-stray,
Hark—to their orderly thunder-tread !
These, in the night, with the stars are marching
One to the end of the world's one Passion !
You that have taken their Master away,
Where have you laid Him, living or dead ?

VII.

You whose laws have hidden the One Law,
You whose searchings obscure the goal,
You whose systems from chaos begun,
Chance-born, order-less, hark, they are marching,
Hearts and tides and stars to the One Law,
Measured and orderly, rhythmical, whole,
Multitudinous, welded and one.

VIII.

Split your threads of the seamless purple,
Round you marches the world-wide host,
Round your skies is the marching sky,
Out in the night there's an army marching,
Clothed with the night's own seamless purple,
Making death for the King their boast,
Marching straight to Eternity.

IX.

What do you know of the shot-riddled banners
 Royally surging out of the gloom,
 You whose denials their souls despise?
Out in the night they are marching, marching!
Treasure your wisdom, and leave them their banners!
Then—when you follow them down to the tomb
 Pray for one glimpse of the faith in their eyes.

X.

Pray for one gleam of the white sad faces,
 Moving steadily, row on row,
 Marching away to their hopeless wars
Doomed to be trodden like dung, but marching,
Terrible, beautiful human faces,
 Common as dirt, but softer than snow,
 Coarser than clay, but calm as the stars.

XI.

What of the end? Will your knowledge escape it?
 What of the end of their dumb dark tears?
 You who mock at their faith and sing,
Look, for their ragged old banners are marching
Down to the end—will your knowledge escape it?—
 Down to the end of a few brief years!
 What should they care for the wisdom you bring.

XII.

Count as they pass, their hundreds, thousands,
Millions, marching away to a doom
Younger than London, older than Tyre !
Drum-taps, drum-taps, where are they marching,
Regiments, nations, empires, marching ?
Down thro' the jaws of a world-wide tomb,
Doomed or ever they sprang from the mire !

XIII.

Doomed to be shovelled like dung to the midden,
Trodden and kneaded as clay in the road,
Father and little one, lover and friend,
Out in the night they are marching, marching,
Doomed to be shovelled like dung to the midden,
Bodies that bowed beneath Christ's own load,
Love that—marched to the self-same end.

XIV.

What of the end ?—O, not of your glory,
Not of your wealth or your fame that will live
Half as long as this pellet of dust !—
Out in the night there's an army marching,
Nameless, noteless, empty of glory,
Ready to suffer and die and forgive,
Marching onward in simple trust,

XV.

Wearing their poor little toy love-tokens
Under the march of the terrible skies !
Is it a jest for a God to play ?—
Whose is the jest of these millions marching,
Wearing their poor little toy love-tokens,
Waving their voicelessly grand good-byes,
Secretly trying, sometimes, to pray.

XVI.

Dare you dream their trust in Eternity
Broken, O you to whom prayers are vain,
You who dream that their God is dead ?
Take your answer—these millions marching
Out of Eternity, into Eternity,
These that smiled “We shall meet again,”
Even as the life from their loved one fled.

XVII.

Not for the sake of the proud and the mighty,
Not for their doubts will He break that trust,
He, the Eternal, beyond their ken :
Out in the night there's an army marching,
Not of the proud, the famous, the mighty !
Loud to God from the silent dust
Rings the cry of the unknown men.

XVIII.

This is the answer, not of the sages,
Not of the loves that are ready to part,
Ready to find their oblivion sweet !
Out in the night there's an army marching,
Men that have toiled thro' the endless ages,
Men of the pit and the desk and the mart,
Men that remember, the men in the street,

XIX.

These that into the gloom of Eternity
Stream thro' the dream of this lamp-starred town
London, an army of clouds to-night !
These that of old came marching, marching,
Out of the terrible gloom of Eternity,
Bowing their heads at Rameses' frown,
Streaming away thro' Babylon's light ;

XX.

These that swept at the sound of the trumpet
Out thro' the night like gonfaloned clouds,
Exiled hosts when the world was Rome,
Tossing their tattered old eagles, marching
Down to sleep till the great last trumpet,
London, Nineveh, rend your shrouds,
Rally the legions and lead them home,

XXI.

Lead them home with their glorious faces
Moving steadily, row on row
Marching up from the end of wars,
Out of the Valley of Shadows, marching,
Terrible, beautiful, human faces,
Common as dirt, but softer than snow,
Coarser than clay, but calm as the stars,

XXII.

Marching out of the endless ages,
Marching out of the dawn of time,
Endless columns of unknown men,
Endless ranks of the stars o'er-arching,
Endless ranks of an army marching
Numberless out of the numberless ages,
Men out of every race and clime,
Marching steadily, now as then.

THE SKY-LARK CAGED.

I.

BEAT, little breast, against the wires,
Strive, little wings and misted eyes,
Which one wild gleam of memory fires
Beseeching still the unfettered skies,
Whither at dewy dawn you sprang
Quivering with joy from this dark earth and sang.

II.

And still you sing—your narrow cage
Shall set at least your music free!
Its rapturous wings in glorious rage
Mount and are lost in liberty,
While those who caged you creep on earth
Blind prisoners from the hour that gave them birth.

III.

Sing! The great City surges round.
Blinded with light, thou canst not know.
Dream! 'Tis the fir-woods' windy sound
Rolling a psalm of praise below.
Sing, o'er the bitter dust and shame,
And touch us with thine own transcendent flame.

IV.

Sing, o'er the City dust and slime;
Sing, o'er the squalor and the gold,
The greed that darkens earth with crime,
The spirits that are bought and sold.
O, shower the healing notes like rain,
And lift us to the height of grief again.

V.

Sing! The same music swells your breast,
And the wild notes are still as sweet
As when above the fragrant nest
And the wide billowing fields of wheat
You soared and sang the livelong day,
And in the light of heaven dissolved away.

VI.

The light of heaven ! Is it not here ?
One rapture, one ecstatic joy,
One passion, one sublime despair,
One grief which nothing can destroy,
You—though your dying eyes are wet
Remember, 'tis our blunted hearts forget.

VII.

Beat, little breast, still beat, still beat,
Strive, misted eyes and tremulous wings ;
Swell, little throat, your *Sweet ! Sweet ! Sweet !*
Thro' which such deathless memory rings :
Better to break your heart and die,
Than, like your gaolers, to forget your sky.

THE LOVERS' FLIGHT.

I.

COME, the dusk is lit with flowers !
Quietly take this guiding hand :
Little breath to waste is ours
On the road to lovers' land.
Time is in his dungeon-keep !
Ah, not thither, lest he hear,
Starting from his old gray sleep,
Rosy feet upon the stair.

II.

Ah, not thither, lest he heed
Ere we reach the rusty door !
Nay, the stairways only lead
Back to his dark world once more :
There's a merrier way we know
Leading to a lovelier night—
See, your casement all a-glow
Diamonding the wonder-light.

III.

Fling the flowery lattice wide,
Let the silken ladder down,
Swiftly to the garden glide
Glimmering in your long white gown,
Rosy from your pillow, sweet,
Come, unsandalled and divine ;
Let the blossoms stain your feet
And the stars behold them shine.

IV.

Swift, our pawing palfreys wait,
And the page—Dan Cupid—frets,
Holding at the garden gate
Reins that chime like castanets,
Bits a-foam with fairy flakes
Flung from seas whence Venus rose :
Come, for Father Time awakes
And the star of morning glows.

V.

Swift—one satin foot shall sway
Half a heart-beat in my hand,
Swing to stirrup and swift away
Down the road to lovers' land :

Ride—the moon is dusky gold,
Ride—our hearts are young and warm,
Ride—the hour is growing old,
And the next may break the charm.

VI.

Swift, ere we that thought the song
Full—for others—of the truth,
We that smiled, contented, strong,
Dowered with endless wealth of youth,
Find that like a summer cloud
Youth indeed has crept away,
Find the robe a clinging shroud
And the hair be-sprent with gray.

VII.

Ride—we'll leave it all behind,
All the turmoil and the tears,
All the mad vindictive blind
Yelping of the heartless years!
Ride—the ringing world 's in chase,
Yet we've slipped old Father Time,
By the love-light in your face
And the jingle of this rhyme.

VIII.

Ride—for still the hunt is loud !
Ride—our steeds can hold their own !
Yours, a satin sea-wave, proud,
Queen, to be your living throne,
Glittering with the foam and fire
Churned from seas whence Venus rose,
Tow'rds the gates of our desire
Gloriously burning flows.

IX.

He, with streaming flanks a-smoke,
Needs no spur of blood-stained steel :
Only that soft thudding stroke
Once, o' the little satin heel,
Drives his mighty heart, your slave,
Bridled with these bells of rhyme,
Onward, like a crested wave
Thundering out of hail of Time.

X.

On, till from a rosy spark
Fairy-small as gleams your hand,
Broadening as we cleave the dark,
Dawn the gates of lovers' land,

Nearing, sweet, till breast and brow
Lifted through the purple night
Catch the deepening glory now
And your eyes the wonder-light.

XI.

E'en as tow'rd your face I lean
Swooping nigh the gates of bliss
I the king and you the queen
Crown each other with a kiss
Riding, soaring like a song
Burn we tow'rds the heaven above,
You the sweet and I the strong
And in both the fire of love.

XII.

Ride—though now the distant chase
Knows that we have slipped old Time,
Lift the love-light of your face,
Shake the bridle of this rhyme,
See, the flowers of night and day
Streaming past on either hand,
Ride into the eternal May,
Ride into the lovers' land.

THE ROCK POOL.

I.

BRIGHT as a fallen fragment of the sky,
Mid shell-encrusted rocks the sea-pool shone,
Glassing the sunset-clouds in its clear heart,
A small enchanted world enwalled apart
In diamond mystery,
Content with its own dreanis, its own strict zone
Of urchin woods, its fairy bights and bars,
Its daisy-disked anemones and rose-feathered stars.

II.

Forsaken for a while by that deep roar
Which works in storm and calm the eternal will,
Drags down the cliffs, bids the great hills go by
And shepherds their multitudinous pageantry,—

Here, on this ebb-tide shore
A jewelled bath of beauty, sparkling still,
The little sea-pool smiled away the sea,
And slept on its own plane of bright tranquillity.

III.

A self-sufficing soul, a pool in trance,
Un-stirred by all the spirit-winds that blow
From o'er the gulfs of change, content, ere yet
On its own crags, which rough peaked limpets fret
The last rich colours glance,
Content to mirror the sea-bird's wings of snow,
Or feel in some small creek, ere sunset fails,
A tiny Nautilus hoist its lovely purple sails ;

IV.

And, furrowing into pearl that rosy bar,
Sail its own soul from fairy fringe to fringe,
Lured by the twinkling prey 'twas born to reach
In its own pool, by many an elfin beach
Of jewels, adventuring far
Through the last mirrored cloud and sunset-tinge
And past the rainbow-dripping cave where lies
The dark green pirate-crab at watch with beaded eyes,

V.

Or fringed Medusa floats like light in light,
Medusa, with the loveliest of all fays
Pent in its irised bubble of jellied sheen,
Trailing long ferns of moon-light, shot with green
And crimson rays and white,
Waving ethereal tendrils, ghostly sprays,
Daring the deep, dissolving in the sun,
The vanishing point of life, the light whence life begun,

VI.

Poised between life, light, time, eternity,
So tinged with all, that in its delicate brain
Kindling it as a lamp with her bright wings
Day-long, night-long, young Ariel sits and sings
Echoing the lucid sea,
Listening it echo her own unearthly strain,
Watching through lucid walls the world's rich tide,
One light, one substance with her own, rise and
subside.

VII.

And over soft brown woods, limpid, serene,
Puffing its fans the Nautilus went its way,
And from a hundred salt and weedy shelves
Peered little hornéd faces of sea-elves :

The prawn darted, half-seen,
Thro' watery sunlight, like a pale green ray,
And all around, from soft green waving bowers,
Creatures like fruit out-crept from fluted shells like
flowers.

VIII.

And, over all, that glowing mirror spread
The splendour of its heaven-reflecting gleams,
A level wealth of tints, calm as the sky
That broods above our own mortality :
The temporal seas had fled,
And ah, what hopes, what fears, what mystic dreams
Could ruffle it now from any deeper deep ?
Content in its own bounds it slept a changeless sleep.

IX.

Suddenly, from that heaven beyond belief,
Suddenly, from that world beyond its ken,
Dashing great billows o'er its rosy bars
Shivering its dreams into a thousand stars,
Flooding each sun-dried reef
With waves of colour, (as once, for mortal men
Bethesda's angel) with blue eyes, wide and wild,
Naked into the pool there stepped a little child.

X.

Her red-gold hair against the far green sea
 Blew thickly out : her slender golden form
Shone dark against the richly waning west
As with one hand she splashed her glistening breast,
 Then waded up to her knee
And frothed the whole pool into a fairy storm ! . . .
 So, stooping through our skies, of old, there came
Angels that once could set this world's dark pool
 a-flame,

XI.

From which the seas of faith have ebbed away,
 Leaving the lonely shore too bright, too bare,
While mirrored softly in the smooth wet sand
A deeper sunset sees its blooms expand
 But all too phantom-fair,
Between the dark brown rocks and sparkling spray
 Where the low ripples pleaded, shrank and sighed,
And tossed a moment's rainbow heavenward ere they
 died.

XII.

Stoop, starry souls, incline to this dark coast,
Where all too long, too faithlessly, we dream.
Stoop to the world's dark pool, its crags and scars,
Its yellow sands, its rosy harbour-bars,
And soft green wastes that gleam
But with some glorious drifting god-like ghost
Of cloud, some vaguely passionate crimson stain :
Rend the blue waves of heaven, shatter our sleep
again !

THE ISLAND HAWK.

(A SONG FOR THE FIRST LAUNCHING OF HIS MAJESTY'S
AERIAL NAVY.)

Chorus—

I.

*Ships have swept with my conquering name
Over the waves of war,
Swept thro' the Spaniards' thunder and flame
To the splendour of Trafalgar :
On the blistered decks of their great renown,
In the wind of my storm-beat wings,
Hawkins and Hawke went sailing down
To the harbour of deep-sea kings !
By the storm-beat wings of the hawk, the hawk,
Bent beak and pitiless breast,
They clove their way thro' the red sea-fray :
Who wakens me now to the quest ?*

II.

*Hushed are the whimpering winds on the hill,
Dumb is the shrinking plain,
And the songs that enchanted the woods are still
As I shoot to the skies again !*

Does the blood grow black on my fierce bent beak,
Does the down still cling to my claw?
Who brightened these eyes for the prey they seek?
Life, I follow thy law!

For I am the hawk, the hawk, the hawk!
Who knoweth my pitiless breast?
Who watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

III.

As I glide and glide with my peering head,
Or swerve at a puff of smoke,
Who watcheth my wings on the wind outspread,
Here—gone—with an instant stroke?
Who toucheth the glory of life I feel
As I buffet this great glad gale,
Spire and spire to the cloud-world, wheel,
Loosen my wings and sail?

For I am the hawk, the island hawk,
Who knoweth my pitiless breast?
Who watcheth me sway in the sun's bright way?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

IV.

Had they given me "Cloud-cuckoo-city" to guard
Between mankind and the sky,
Tho' the dew might shine on an April sward,
Iris had ne'er passed by !
Swift as her beautiful wings might be
From the rosy Olympian hill,
Had Epops entrusted the gates to me
Earth were his kingdom still.

For I am the hawk, the archer, the hawk !

Who knoweth my pitiless breast ?

Who watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way ?

Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

V.

My mate in the nest on the high bright tree
Blazing with dawn and dew,
She knoweth the gleam of the world and the glee
As I drop like a bolt from the blue ;

She knoweth the fire of the level flight
As I skim, close, close to the ground,
With the long grass lashing my breast and the bright
Dew-drops flashing around.

She watcheth the hawk, the hawk, the hawk
(O, the red-blotched eggs in the nest !)
Watcheth him sway in the sun's bright way ;
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

VI.

She builded her nest on the high bright wold,
She was taught in a world afar,
The lore that is only an April old
Yet old as the evening star ;
Life of a far off ancient day
In an hour unhooded her eyes ;
In the time of the budding of one green spray
She was wise as the stars are wise.

Brown flower of the tree of the hawk, the hawk,
On the old elm's burgeoning breast,
She watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way :
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

VII.

Spirit and sap of the sweet swift Spring,
Fire of our island soul,
Burn in her breast and pulse in her wing
While the endless ages roll ;
Avatar—she—of the perilous pride
That plundered the golden West,
Her glance is a sword, but it sweeps too wide
For a rumour to trouble her rest.

*She goeth her glorious way, the hawk,
She nurseth her brood alone :
She will not swoop for an owlet's whoop,
She hath calls and cries of her own.*

VIII.

There was never a dale in our isle so deep
That her wide wings were not free
To soar to the sovran heights and keep
Sight of the rolling sea :

Is it there, is it here in the rolling skies,
The realm of her future fame?

Look once, look once in her glittering eyes,
Ye shall find her the same, the same.

*Up to the skies with the hawk, the hawk,
As it was in the days of old!*

*Ye shall sail once more, ye shall soar, ye shall soar
To the new-found realms of gold.*

IX.

She hath ridden on white Arabian steeds
Thro' the ringing English dells,
For the joy of a great queen, hunting in state,
To the music of golden bells;
A queen's fair fingers have drawn the hood
And tossed her aloft in the blue,
A white hand eager for needless blood;
I hunt for the needs of two.

Yet I am the hawk, the hawk, the hawk!

Who knoweth my pitiless breast?

Who watcheth me sway in the sun's bright way?

Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

X.

Who fashioned her wide and splendid eyes
That have stared in the eyes of kings ?
With a silken twist she was looped to their wrist :
She has clawed at their jewelled rings !
Who flung her first thro' the crimson dawn
To pluck him a prey from the skies,
When the love-light shone upon lake and lawn
In the valleys of Paradise ?

*Who fashioned the hawk, the hawk, the hawk,
Bent beak and pitiless breast ?
Who watcheth him sway in the wild wind's way ?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.*

XI.

Is there ever a song in all the world
Shall say how the quest began
With the beak and the wings that have made us kings
And cruel—almost—as man ?

The wild wind whimpers across the heath
Where the sad little tufts of blue
And the red-stained gray little feathers of death
Flutter! *Who fashioned us? Who?*
Who fashioned the scimitar wings of the hawk,
Bent beak and arrowy breast?
Who watcheth him sway in the sun's bright way?
Flee—flee—for I quest, I quest.

XII.

Linnet and wood-pecker, red-cap and jay,
Shriek that a doom shall fall
One day, one day, on my pitiless way
From the sky that is over us all;
But the great blue hawk of the heavens above
Fashioned the world for his prey,—
King and queen and hawk and dove,
We shall meet in his clutch that day;
Shall I not welcome him, I, the hawk?
Yea, cry, as they shrink from his claw,
Cry, as I die, to the unknown sky,
Life, I follow thy law!

XIII.

Chorus—

Ships have swept with my conquering name . . .

Over the world and beyond,

Hark ! Bellerophon, Marlborough, Thunderer,

Condor, respond !—

On the blistered decks of their dread renown,

In the rush of my storm-beat wings,

Hawkins and Hawke went sailing down

To the glory of deep-sea kings !

By the storm-beat wings of the hawk, the hawk,

Bent beak and pitiless breast,

They clove their way thro' the red sea-fray !

Who wakens me now to the quest.

THE ADMIRAL'S GHOST.

I TELL you a tale to-night
Which a seaman told to me,
With eyes that gleamed in the lanthorn light
And a voice as low as the sea.

You could almost hear the stars
Twinkling up in the sky,
And the old wind woke and moaned in the spars,
And the same old waves went by,

Singing the same old song
As ages and ages ago,
While he froze my blood in that deep-sea night
With the things that he seemed to know.

A bare foot pattered on deck ;
Ropes creaked ; then—all grew still,
And he pointed his finger straight in my face
And growled, as a sea-dog will.

"Do 'ee know who Nelson was?
That pore little shrivelled form
With the patch on his eye and the pinned-up sleeve
And a soul like a North Sea storm?

"Ask of the Devonshire men!
They know, and they'll tell you true;
He wasn't the pore little chawed-up chap
That Hardy thought he knew.

"He wasn't the man you think!
His patch was a dern disguise!
For he knew that they'd find him out, d'you see,
If they looked him in both his eyes.

"He was twice as big as he seemed;
But his clothes were cunningly made.
He'd both of his hairy arms all right!
The sleeve was a trick of the trade.

"You've heard of sperrits, no doubt;
Well, there's more in the matter than that!
But he wasn't the patch and he wasn't the sleeve,
And he wasn't the laced cocked-hat.

"Nelson was just—a Ghost !

You may laugh ! But the Devonshire men
They knew that he'd come when England called,
And they know that he'll come again.

"I'll tell you the way it was
(For none of the landsmen know),
And to tell it you right, you must go a-starn
Two hundred years or so.

.

"The waves were lapping and slapping
The same as they are to-day ;
And Drake lay dying aboard his ship
In Nombre Dios Bay.

"The scent of the foreign flowers
Came floating all around ;
'But I'd give my soul for the smell o' the pitch,'
Says he, 'in Plymouth Sound.

"'What shall I do,' he says,
'When the guns begin to roar,
An' England wants me, and me not there
To shatter 'er foes once more ?'

“(You’ve heard what he said, maybe,
But I’ll mark you the p’int^s again ;
For I want you to box your compass right
And get my story plain.)

“ ‘You must take my drum,’ he says,
‘To the old sea-wall at home ;
And if ever you strike that drum,’ he says,
‘Why, strike me blind, I’ll come !

“ ‘If England needs me, dead
Or living, I’ll rise that day !
I’ll rise from the darkness under the sea
Ten thousand miles away.’

“That’s what he said ; and he died ;
An’ his pirates, listenin’ roun’,
With their crimson doublets and jewelled swords
That flashed as the sun went down.

“They sewed him up in his shroud
With a round-shot top and toe,
To sink him under the salt sharp sea
Where all good seamen go.

"They lowered him down in the deep,
And there in the sunset light
They boomed a broadside over his grave,
As meanin' to say 'Good-night.'

"They sailed away in the dark
To the dear little isle they knew ;
And they hung his drum by the old sea-wall
The same as he told them to.

.

"Two hundred years went by,
And the guns began to roar,
And England was fighting hard for her life,
As ever she fought of yore.

"'It's only my dead that count,'
She said, as she says to-day ;
'It isn't the ships and it isn't the guns
'Ull sweep Trafalgar's Bay.'

"D'you guess who Nelson was ?
You may laugh, but it's true as true !
There was more in that pore little chawed-up chap
Than ever his best friend knew.

"The foe was creepin' close,
In the dark, to our white-cliffed isle;
They were ready to leap at England's throat,
When—O, you may smile, you may smile ;

"But—ask of the Devonshire men ;
For they heard in the dead of night
The roll of a drum, and they saw *him* pass
On a ship all shining white.

"He stretched out his dead cold face
And he sailed in the grand old way !
The fishes had taken an eye and an arm,
But he swept Trafalgar's Bay.

"Nelson—was Francis Drake !
O, what matters the uniform,
Or the patch on your eye or your pinned-up sleeve,
If your soul's like a North Sea storm ? "

EDINBURGH.

I.

CITY of mist and rain and blown grey spaces,
Dashed with wild wet colour and gleam of tears,
Dreaming in Holyrood halls of the passionate faces
Lifted to one Queen's face that has conquered the years,
Are not the halls of thy memory haunted places?
Cometh there not as a moon (where the blood-rust sears
Floors a-flutter of old with silks and laces),
Gliding, a ghostly Queen, thro' a mist of tears?

II.

Proudly here, with a loftier pinnacled splendour,
Throned in his northern Athens, what spells remain
Still on the marble lips of the Wizard, and render
Silent the gazer on glory without a stain!

Here and here, do we whisper, with hearts more tender,
Tusitala wandered thro' mist and rain ;
Rainbow-eyed and frail and gallant and slender,
Dreaming of pirate-isles in a jewelled main.

III.

Up the Canongate climbeth, cleft asunder
Raggedly here, with a glimpse of the distant sea
Flashed through a crumbling alley, a glimpse of wonder,
Nay, for the City is throned on Eternity !
Hark ! from the soaring castle a cannon's thunder
Closeth an hour for the world and an æon for me,
Gazing at last from the martial heights whereunder
Deathless memories roll to an ageless sea.

IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE.

THREE long isles of sunset-cloud,
Poised in an ocean of gold,
Floated away in the west
As the long train southward rolled ;

And through the gleam and shade of the panes,
While meadow and wood went by,
Across the streaming earth
We watched the steadfast sky.

Dark before the westward window,
Heavy and bloated, rolled
The face of a drunken woman
Nodding against the gold ;

Dark before the infinite glory,
With bleared and leering eyes,
It stupidly lurched and nodded
Against the tender skies.

*What had ye done to her, masters of men,
That her head should be bowed down thus—
Thus for your golden vespers,
And deepening angelus?*

Dark, besotted, malignant, vacant,
Slobbering, wrinkled, old,
Weary and wickedly smiling,
She nodded against the gold.

Pitiful, loathsome, maudlin, lonely,
Her moist, inhuman eyes
Blinked at the flies on the window,
And could not see the skies.

As a beast that turns and returns to a mirror
And will not see its face,
Her eyes rejected the sunset,
Her soul lay dead in its place,

Dead in the furrows and folds of her flesh
As a corpse lies lapped in the shroud :
Silently floated beside her
The isles of sunset-cloud.

*What had ye done to her, years upon years,
That her head should be bowed down thus—
Thus for your golden vespers,
And deepening angelus?*

Her nails were blackened and split with labour,
Her back was heavily bowed;
Silently floated beside her
The isles of sunset-cloud.

Over their tapering streaks of lilac,
In breathless depths afar,
Bright as the tear of an angel
Glittered a lonely star.

While the hills and the streams of the world went past us,
And the long train roared and rolled
Southward, and dusk was falling,
She nodded against the gold.

AN EAST-END COFFEE-STALL.

Down the dark alley a ring of orange light
Glow. God, what leprous tatters of distress,
Droppings of misery, rags of Thy loneliness
Quiver and heave like vermin, out of the night !

Like crippled rats, creeping out of the gloom,
O Life, for one of thy terrible moments there,
Lit by the little flickering yellow flare,
Faces that mock at life and death and doom,

Faces that long, long since have known the worst,
Faces of women that have seen the child
Waste in their arms, and strangely, terribly, smiled
When the dark nipple of death has eased its thirst ;

Faces of men that once, though long ago,
Saw the faint light of hope, though far away,—
Hope that, at end of some tremendous day,
They yet might reach some life where tears could flow ;

Faces of our humanity, ravaged, white,
Wrenched with old love, old hate, older despair,
Steal out of vile filth-dropping dens to stare
On that wild monstrosity of a naphtha light.

They crowd before the stall's bright altar-rail,
Grotesque, and sacred, for that light's brief span,
And all the shuddering darkness cries, "All hail,
Daughters and Sons of Man!"

See, see, once more, though all their souls be dead,
They hold it up, triumphantly hold it up,
They feel, they warm their hands upon the Cup;
Their crapulous hands, their claw-like hands break Bread!

See, with lean faces rapturously a-glow
For a brief while they dream and munch and drink;
Then, one by one, once more, silently slink
Back, back into the gulping mist. They go,

One by one, out of the ring of light!
They creep, like crippled rats, into the gloom,
Into the fogs of life and death and doom,
Into the night, the immeasurable night.

RED OF THE DAWN.

I.

THE Dawn peered in with blood-shot eyes
 Pressed close against the cracked old pane.
The garret slept : the slow sad rain
Had ceased : grey fogs obscured the skies ;
But Dawn peered in with haggard eyes.

II.

All as last night? 'The three-legged chair,
 The bare walls and the tattered bed,
All !—but for those wild flakes of red
(And Dawn, perhaps, had splashed them there.!)
Round the bare walls, the bed, the chair.

III.

'Twas here, last night, when winds were loud,
A ragged singing-girl, she came
Out of the tavern's glare and shame,
With some few pence—for she was proud—
Came home to sleep, when winds were loud.

IV.

And she sleeps well ; for she was tired !
That huddled shape beneath the sheet
With knees up-drawn, no wind or sleet
Can wake her now ! Sleep she desired ;
And she sleeps well, for she was tired.

V.

And there was one that followed her
With some unhappy curse called "love" :
Last night, though winds beat loud above,
She shrank ! Hark, on the creaking stair,
What stealthy footstep followed her ?

VI.

But now the Curse, it seemed, had gone !
The small tin-box, wherein she hid
Old childish treasures, had burst its lid,
Dawn kissed her doll's cracked face. It shone
Red-smeared, but laughing—*the Curse is gone.*

VII.

So she sleeps well : she does not move ;
And on the wall, the chair, the bed,
Is it the Dawn that splashes red,
High as the text where *God is Love*
Hangs o'er her head ? She does not move.

VIII.

The clock dictates its old refrain :
All else is quiet ; or, far away,
Shaking the world with new-born day,
There thunders past some mighty train :
The clock dictates its old refrain.

IX.

The Dawn peers in with blood-shot eyes :
The crust, the broken cup are there !
She does not rise yet to prepare
Her scanty meal. God does not rise
And pluck the blood-stained sheet from her ;
But Dawn peers in with haggard eyes.

LAVENDER.

LAVENDER, lavender,
That makes your linen sweet ;
The hawker brings his basket
Down the sooty street :
The dirty doors and pavements
Are simmering in the heat :
He brings a dream to London,
And drags his weary feet.

Lavender, lavender,
From where the bee hums,
To the loud roar of London,
With purple dreams he comes,
From ragged lanes of wild-flowers
To ragged London slums,
With a basket full of lavender
And purple dreams he comes.

Is it nought to you that hear him ?
With the old strange cry
The weary hawker passes,
And some will come and buy,
And some will let him pass away
And only heave a sigh,
But most will neither heed nor hear
When dreams go by.

Lavender, lavender !

*His songs were fair and sweet,
He brought us harvests out of heaven,
Full sheaves of radiant wheat ;
He brought us keys to Paradise,
And hawked them thro' the street ;
He brought his dreams to London,
And dragged his weary feet.*

Lavender, lavender !

He is gone. The sunset glows ;
But through the brain of London
The mystic fragrance flows.
Each foggy cell remembers,
Each ragged alley knows,
The land he left behind him,
The land to which he goes.

THE DREAM-CHILD'S INVITATION.

I.

ONCE upon a time !—Ah, now the light is burning dimly,
 Peterkin is here again : he wants another tale !
 Don't you hear him whispering—*The wind is in the*
chimley,
The ottoman's a treasure-ship, we'll all set sail ?

II.

All set sail ? No, the wind is very loud to-night :
 The darkness on the waters is much deeper than of
 yore,
 Yet I wonder—hark, he whispers—if the little streets
 are still as bright
 In old Japan, in old Japan, that happy haunted
 shore.

III.

I wonder—hush, he whispers—if perhaps the world will
wake again

When Christmas brings the stories back from where
the skies are blue,

Where clouds are scattering diamonds down on every
cottage window-pane,

And every boy's a fairy prince, and every tale is
true.

IV.

There the sword Excalibur is thrust into the dragon's
throat,

Evil there is evil, black is black, and white is
white:

There the child triumphant hurls the villain spluttering
into the moat;

There the captured princess only waits the peerless
knight.

v.

Fairyland is gleaming there beyond the Sherwood Forest
trees,

There the City of the Clouds has anchored on the
plain

All her misty vistas and slumber-rosy palaces

*(Shall we not, ah, shall we not, wander there
again?)*

vi.

"Happy ever after" there, the lights of home a welcome
fling

Softly thro' the darkness as the star that shone
of old,

Softly over Bethlehem and o'er the little cradled
King

Whom the sages worshipped with their frankincense
and gold.

VII.

Once upon a time—perhaps a hundred thousand years ago—

Whisper to me, Peterkin, I have forgotten when !

Once upon a time there was a way, a way we used to know

For stealing off at twilight from the weary ways of men.

VIII.

Whisper it, O whisper it—the way, the way is all I need !

All the heart and will are here and all the deep desire !

Once upon a time—ah, now the light is drawing near indeed,

I see the fairy faces flush to roses round the fire.

IX.

Once upon a time—the little lips are on my cheek again,
Little fairy fingers clasped and clinging draw me nigh,
Dreams, no more than dreams, but they unloose the
weary prisoner's chain
And lead him from his dungeon ! “ What's a thousand
years ? ” they cry.

X.

A thousand years, a thousand years, a little drifting
dream ago,
All of us were hunting with a band of merry men,
The skies were blue, the boughs were green, the clouds
were crisping isles of snow . . .
. . . So Robin blew his bugle, and the Now became
the Then.

THE TRAMP TRANSFIGURED.

(AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A CORN-FLOWER
MILLIONAIRE.)

I.

ALL the way to Fairyland across the thyme and heather,
Round a little bank of fern that rustled on the sky,
Me and stick and bundle, sir, we jogged along together,—

(Changeable the weather? Well—it aint all pie!)
Just about the sunset—Won't you listen to my story?—
Look at me! I'm only rags and tatters to your
eye!

Sir, that blooming sunset crowned this battered hat with
glory!

Me that was a crawling worm became a butterfly—
(Aint it hot and dry?

Thank you, sir, thank you, sir!) a blooming butterfly.

II.

Well, it happened this way ! I was lying loose and lazy,
Just as of a Sunday, you yourself might think no
shame,
Puffing little clouds of smoke, and picking at a daisy,
Dreaming of your dinner, p'raps, or wishful for the
same :
Suddenly, around that ferny bank there slowly waddled—
Slowly as the finger of a clock her shadow came—
Slowly as a tortoise down that winding path she toddled,
Leaning on a crookéd staff, a poor old crookéd dame,
Limping, but not lame,
Tick, tack, tick, tack, a poor old crookéd dame.

III.

Slowly did I say, sir ? Well, you've heard that funny
fable
Consekint the tortoise and the race it give an 'are ?
This was curiouser than that ! At first I wasn't able
Quite to size the memory up that bristled thro' my
hair :

Suddenly, I'd got it, with a nasty shivery feeling,

While she walked and walked and yet was not a bit
more near,—

Sir, it was the tread-mill earth beneath her feet a-wheeling

Faster than her feet could trot to heaven or anywhere,

Earth's revolvin' stair

Wheeling, while my wayside clump was kind of
anchored there.

IV.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, and just a little nearer,

Inch and 'arf an inch she went, but never gained a
yard :

Quiet as a fox I lay ; I didn't wish to scare 'er,

Watching thro' the ferns, and thinking "What a rum
old card !"

Both her wrinkled tortoise eyes with yellow resin oozing,

Both her poor old bony hands were red and seamed
and scarred !

Lord, I felt as if myself was in a public boozing,

While my own old woman went about and scrubbed
and charred !

Lord, it seemed so hard !

Tick, tack, tick, tack, she never gained a yard.

V.

Yus, and there in front of her—I hadn't seen it rightly—

Lurked that little finger-post to point another road,
Just a tiny path of poppies twisting infi-nite-ly

/ Through the whispering seas of wheat, a scarlet thread
that showed

White with ox-eye daisies here and there and chalky
cobble,

Blue with waving corn-flowers : far and far away it
glowed,

Winding into heaven, I thinks ; but, Lord, the way she
hobbles,

Lord, she'll never reach it, for she bears too great
a load ;

Yus, and then I knowed,

If she did, she couldn't, for the board was marked
No Road.

VI.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, I couldn't wait no longer !

Up I gets and bows polite and pleasant as a toff—

“Arternoon,” I says, “I’m glad your boots are going
stronger ;

Only thing I’m dreading is your feet ’ull both
come off.”

Tick, tack, tick, tack, she didn't stop to answer,

"Arternoon," she says, and sort o' chokes a little cough,

"I must get to Piddinghoe to-morrow if I can, sir!"

"Demme, my good woman! Haw! Don't think I mean to loff,"

Says I, like a toff,

"Where d'you mean to sleep to-night? God made this grass for go'ff."

VII.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, and smilingly she eyed me

(Dreadful the low cunning of these creechars, don't you think?)

"That's all right! The weather's bright. Them bushes there 'ull hide me.

Don't the gorse smell nice?" I felt my derved old eyelids blink!

"Supper? I've a crust of bread, a big one, and a bottle,"

(Just as I expected! Ah, these creechars always drink!)

"Sugar and water and half a pinch of tea to rinse my
throatle,

Then I'll curl up cosy!"—"If you're cotched it
means the clink!"

—"Yus, but don't you think
If a star should see me, God 'ull tell that star to wink?"

VIII.

"Now, look here," I says, "I don't know what your
blooming age is!"

"Three-score years and five," she says, "that's five
more years to go

Tick, tack, tick, tack, before I gets my wages!"

"Wages all be damned," I says, "there's one thing
that I know—

Gals that stay out late o' nights are sure to meet wi'
sorrow.

Speaking as a toff," I says, "it isn't *comme il faut*!
Tell me why you want to get to Piddinghoe to-morrow."

"That was where my son worked, twenty years ago!"—

"Twenty years ago?"

Never wrote? May still be there? Remember
you? . . . Just so!"

IX.

Yus, it was a drama ; but she weren't my long-lost
parent !

Tick, tack, tick, tack, she trotted all the while,
Never getting forrarder, and not the least aware on't,
Though I stood beside her with a sort of silly smile
Stock-still! *Tick, tack!* This blooming world's a bubble :
There I stood and stared at it, mile on flowery mile,
Chasing o' the sunset.—“Gals are sure to meet wi'
trouble

Staying out o' nights,” I says, once more, and tries to
smile,

“Come, that aint your style,
Here's a shilling, mother, for to-day I've made my
pile !”

X.

Yus, a dozen coppers, all my capital, it fled, sir,
Representin' twelve bokays that cost me nothink each,
Twelve bokays o' corn-flowers blue that grew beside my
bed, sir,
That same day, at sunrise, when the sky was like a
peach :

Easy as a poet's dreams they blossomed round my
head, sir,

All I had to do was just to lift my hand and reach :
So, upon the roaring waves I cast my blooming bread, sir,
Bread I'd earned with nose-gays on the bare-fut
Brighton beach,

Nose-gays *and* a speech,
All about the bright blue eyes they matched on
Brighton Beach.

XI.

Still, you've only got to hear the bankers on the budget,
Then you'll know the giving game is hardly "high
finance" ;

Which no more it wasn't for that poor old dame to
trudge it,

Tick, tack, tick, tack, on such a devil's dance :

Crumbs, it took me quite aback to see her stop so humble,
Casting up into my face a sort of shiny glance,

Bless you, bless you, that was what I thought I heard
her mumble,

Lord, a prayer for poor old Bill, a rummy sort of
chance !

Crumbs, that shiny glance
Kinder made me king of all the sky from here to France.

XII.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, but now she toddled faster :

Soon she'd reach the little twisted by-way through the
wheat.

"Look 'ee here," I says, "young woman, don't you court
disaster !

Peepin' through yon poppies there's a cottage trim and
neat,

White as chalk and sweet as turf : wot price a bed for
sorrow,

Sprigs of lavender between the pillow and the sheet ?"

"No," she says, "I've got to get to Piddinhoe to-morrow !

P'raps they'd tell the work'us ! And I've lashings
here to eat :

Don't the gorse smell sweet ?" . . .

Well, I turned and left her plodding on beside the
wheat.

XIII.

Every cent I'd given her like a hero in a story ;

Yet, alone with leagues of wheat I seemed to grow
aware

Solomon himself, arrayed in all his golden glory,

Couldn't vie with Me, the corn-flower king, the
millionaire !

How to cash those bright blue cheques that night?
My trouser pockets
Jingled sudden! Six more pennies, crept from James
knew where!
Crumbs! I hurried back with eyes just bulging from
their sockets,
Pushed 'em in the old dame's fist and listened for
the prayer,
Shamming not to care,
Bill—the blarsted chicken-thief, the corn-flower
millionaire.

XIV.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, and faster yet she clattered!
Ay, she'd almost gained a yard! I left her once again.
Feeling very warm inside and sort of 'ighly flattered,
On I plodded, all alone, with hay-stacks in my brain.
Suddenly, with *chink—chink—chink*, the old sweet jingle
Startled me! 'Twas THRUPPENCE MORE! three
coppers round and plain!
Lord, temptation struck me and I felt my gullet tingle.
Then—I hurried back beside them seas of golden
grain:
No, I can't explain;
There I thrust 'em in her fist, and left her once again.

XV.

Tinkle-chink ! THREE HA'PENCE ! If the vulgar frac-
tions followed,

Big fleas have little fleas ! It flashed upon me
there,—

Like the snakes of Pharaoh which the snakes of Moses
swallowed

All the world was playing at the tortoise and the
hare :

Half the smallest atom is—my soul was getting tipsy—

Heaven is one big circle and the centre's everywhere,
Yus, and that old woman was an angel and a gipsy,

Yus, and Bill, the chicken-thief, the corn-flower
millionaire,

Shamming not to care,

What was he ? A seraph on the misty rainbow-stair !

XVI.

Don't you make no doubt of it ! The deeper that you
look, sir,

All your ancient poets tell you just the same as me,—

What about old Ovid and his most indecent book, sir,

Morphosizing females into flower and star and tree ?

What about old Proteus and his 'ighly curious 'abits,
Mixing of his old grey beard into the old grey
sea?
What about old Darwin and the hat that brought forth
rabbits,
Mud and slime that growed into the pomp of Ninevey?
What if there should be
One great Power beneath it all, one God in you
and me?

XVII.

Anyway, it seemed to me I'd struck the world's pump-
handle!
"Back with that three ha'pence, Bill," I mutters,
"or you're lost."
Back I hurries thro' the dusk where, shining like a
candle,
Pale before the sunset stood that fairy finger-post.
Sir, she wasn't there! I'd struck the place where
all roads crost,
All the roads in all the world.
She couldn't yet have trotted
Even to the . . . Hist! a stealthy step behind? A
ghost?

Swish! A flying noose had caught me round the neck!

Garotted!

Back I staggered, clutching at the moonbeams, yus,
almost

Throttled! Sir, I boast

Bill is tough, but . . . when it comes to throttling by
a ghost!

.

XVIII.

Winged like a butterfly, tall and slender

Out It steps with the rope on its arm.

"Crumbs," I says, "all right! I surrender!

When have I crossed you or done you harm?

Ef you're a sperrit," I says, "O, crikey,

Ef you're a sperrit, get hence, vamoose!"

Sweet as music, she spoke—"I'm Psyche!"—

Choking me still with her silken noose.

XIX.

Straight at the word from the ferns and blossoms

Fretting the moon-rise over the downs,

Little blue wings and little white bosoms,

Little white faces with golden crowns,

Peeped, and the colours came twinkling round me,
Laughed, and the turf grew purple with thyme,
Danced, and the sweet crushed scents nigh drowned
me,
Sang, and the hare-bells rang in chime.

XX.

All around me, gliding and gleaming,
Fair as a fallen sunset-sky,
Butterfly wings came drifting, dreaming,
Clouds of the little folk clustered nigh,
Little white hands like pearls uplifted
Cords of silk in shimmering skeins,
Cast them about me and dreamily drifted
Winding me round with their soft warm chains.

XXI.

Round and round me they dizzily floated,
Binding me faster with every turn :
Crumbs, my pals would have grinned and gloated
Watching me over that fringe of fern,
Bill, with his battered old hat outstanding
Black as a foam-swept rock to the moon,
Bill, like a rainbow of silks expanding
Into a beautiful big cocoon,—

XXII.

Big as a cloud, though his hat still crowned him,
Yus, and his old boots bulged below :
Seas of colour went shimmering round him,
Dancing, glimmering, glancing, a-glow !
Bill knew well what them elves were at, sir,—
Aint you an en-to-mol-o-gist ?
Well, despite of his old black hat, sir,
Bill was *becoming*—a *chrysalist*.

.

XXIII.

Muffled, smothered in a sea of emerald and opal,
Down a dazzling gulf of dreams I sank and sank away,
Wound about with twenty thousand yards of silken
rope, all
Shimmering into crimson, glimmering into gray,
Drowsing, waking, living, dying, just as you regards it,
Buried in a sunset-cloud, or cloud of breaking day,
'Cording as from East or West yourself might look
to-wards it,
Losing, gaining, lost in darkness, ragged, grimy, gay,
'And-cuffed, not to say
Gagged, but both my shoulders budding, sprouting
white as May.

XXIV.

Sprouting like the milky buds o' hawthorn in the night-time,

Pouting like the snowy buds o' roses in July,
Spreading in my chrysalist and waiting for the right time,

When—I thought—they'd bust to wings and Bill would rise and fly,

Tick, tack, tick, tack, as if it came in answer,

Sweeping o'er my head again the tide o' dreams went by,—

I must get to Piddinghoe to-morrow if I can, sir,

Tick, tack, a crackle in my chrysalist, a cry!

Then the warm blue sky

Bust the shell, and out crept Bill—a blooming butterfly!

.

XXV.

Blue as a corn-flower, blazed the zenith: the deepening
East like a scarlet poppy

Burned while, dazzled with golden bloom, white
clouds like daisies, green seas like wheat,

Gripping the sign-post, first, I climbs, to sun my wings,
which were wrinkled and floppy,
Spreading 'em white o'er the words *No Road*, and
hanging fast by my six black feet.

XXVI.

Still on my head was the battered old beaver, but
through it my clubbed antennæ slanted,
("Feelers" yourself would probably call 'em) my
battered old boots were hardly seen
Under the golden fluff of the tail! It was Bill, sir, Bill,
though highly enchanted,
Spreading his beautiful snow-white pinions, tipped
with orange, and veined with green.

XXVII.

Yus, old Bill was an Orange-tip, a spirit in glory, a
blooming Psyche!
New, it was new from East to West this rummy old
world that I dreamed I knew,
How can I tell you the things that I saw with my—what
shall I call 'em?—"feelers?"—O, crikey,
"FEELERS?" You know how the man born blind
described such colours as scarlet or blue.

XXVIII.

"Scarlet," he says, "is the sound of a trumpet, blue is
a flute," for he hasn't a notion!

No, nor nobody living on earth can tell it him plain,
if he hasn't the sight!

That's how it stands with ragged old Bill, a-drift and
a-dream on a measureless ocean,
Gifted wi' fifteen new-born senses, and seeing you
blind to their new strange light.

XXIX.

How can I tell you? Sir, you must wait, till you die
like Bill, ere you understand it!

Only—I saw—the same as a bee that strikes to his
hive ten leagues away—

Straight as a die, while I winked and blinked on that
sun-warmed wood and my wings expanded
(Whistler drawings that men call wings)—I saw—and
I flew—that's all I can say.

XXX.

Flew over leagues of whispering wonder, fairy forests
and flowery palaces,
Love-lorn casements, delicate kingdoms, beautiful
flaming thoughts of—Him;

Feasts of a million blue-mailed angels lifting their
honey-and-wine-brimmed chalices,
Throned upon clouds—(which you'd call white clover)
down to the world's most rosiest rim.

XXXI.

New and new and new and new, the white o' the cliffs
and the wind in the heather,
Yus, and the sea-gulls flying like flakes of the sea
that flashed to the new-born day,
Song, song, song, song, quivering up in the wild blue
weather,
Thousands of seraphim singing together, and me just
flying and—*knowing my way*.

XXXII.

Straight as a die to Piddinghoe's dolphin, and there
I drops in a cottage garden,
There, on a sun-warmed window-sill, I winks and
peeps, for the window was wide!
Crumbs, he was there and fast in her arms and
a-begging his poor old mother's pardon,
There with his lips on her old gray hair, and her head
on his breast while she laughed and cried,—

XXXIII.

*"One and nine-pence that old tramp gave me, or else
I should never have reached you, sonny,
Never, and you just leaving the village to-day and
meaning to cross the sea,
One and nine-pence he gave me, I paid for the farmer's
lift with half o' the money!
Here's the ten-pence halfpenny, sonny, 'twill pay for our
little 'ouse-warming tea."*

.

XXXIV.

Tick, tack, tick, tack, out into the garden
Toddles that old Fairy with his arm about her—so,
Cuddling of her still, and still a-begging of her pardon,
While she says "I wish the corn-flower king could
only know!
Bless him, bless him, once again," she says and softly
gazes
Up to heaven, a-smiling in her mutch as white as
snow,

All among her gilly-flowers and stocks and double
daisies,
Mignonette, forget-me-not, . . . *Twenty years ago*,
All a rosy glow,
This is how it was, she said, *Twenty years ago*.

.

XXXV.

Once again I seemed to wake, the vision it had fled, sir,
There I lay upon the downs: the sky was like a
peach;
Yus, with twelve bokays of corn-flowers blue beside my
bed, sir,
More than usual 'andsome, so they'd bring me two-
pence each.
Easy as a poet's dreams they blossomed round my
head, sir,
All I had to do was just to lift my hand and reach,
Tie 'em with a bit of string, and earn my blooming
bread, sir,
Selling little nose-gays on the bare-foot Brighton
beach,
Nose-gays *and* a speech,
All about the bright blue eyes they matched on
Brighton beach.

XXXVI.

Overhead the singing lark and underfoot the heather,
Far and blue in front of us the unplumbed sky,
Me and stick and bundle, O, we jogs along together,
(Changeable the weather? Well, it aint all pie!)
Weather's like a woman, sir, and if she wants to quarrel,
If her eyes begin to flash and hair begins to fly,
You've to wait a little, then—the story has a moral—
Aint the sunny kisses all the sweeter by and bye?—
(Crumbs, it's 'ot and dry!
Thank you, sir! Thank you, sir!) the sweeter by
and bye.

XXXVII.

So the world's my sweetheart and I sort of want to
squeeze 'er.
Toffs 'ull get no chance of heaven, take 'em in the
lump!
Never laid in hay-fields when the dawn came over-sea,
sir?
Guess it's true that story 'bout the needle and the
hump!

Never crept into a stack because the wind was blowing,
Hollered out a nest and closed the door-way with a
clump,
Laid and heard the whisper of the silence, growing,
growing,
Watched a thousand wheeling stars and wondered if
they'd bump?
What I say would stump
Joshua! But I've done it, sir. Don't think I'm off
my chump.

XXVIII.

If you try and lay, sir, with your face turned up to
wonder,
Up to twenty million miles of stars that roll like one,
Right across to God know where, and you just huddled
under
Like a little beetle with no business of his own,
There you'd hear—like growing grass—a funny silent
sound, sir,
Mixed with curious crackles in a steady undertone,
Just the sound of twenty billion stars a-going round, sir,
Yus, and you beneath 'em like a wise old ant, alone,
Ant upon a stone,
Waving of his antlers, on the Sussex downs, alone.

ON THE DOWNS.

WIDE-EYED our childhood roamed the world
Knee-deep in blowing grass,
And watched the white clouds crisply curled
Above the mountain-pass,
And lay among the purple thyme
And from its fragrance caught
Strange hints from some elusive clime
Beyond the bounds of thought.

Glimpses of fair forgotten things
Beyond the gates of birth,
Half-caught from far off ancient springs
In heaven, and half of earth ;
And coloured like a fairy-tale
And whispering evermore
Half memories from the half-fenced pale
Of lives we lived before.

Here, weary of the roaring town
A-while may I return
And while the west wind roams the down
Lie still, lie still and learn :
Here are green leagues of murmuring wheat
With blue skies overhead,
And, all around, the winds are sweet
With May-bloom, white and red.

And, to and fro, the bee still hums
His low unchanging song,
And the same rustling whisper comes
As through the ages long :
Through all the thousands of the years
That same sweet rumour flows,
With dreaming skies and gleaming tears
And kisses and the rose.

Once more the children throng the lanes,
Themselves like flowers, to weave
Their garlands and their daisy-chains
And listen and believe
The tale of *Once-upon-a-time*,
And hear the *Long-ago*
And *Happy-ever-after* chime
Because it must be so.

And by those thousands of the years
It is, though scarce we see,
Dazed with the rainbows of our tears,
Their steadfast unity,
It is, or life's disjointed schemes,
These stones, these ferns unfurled
With such deep care—a madman's dreams
Were wisdom to this world !

Dust into dust ! Lie still and learn,
Hear how the ages sing
The solemn joy of our return
To that which makes the Spring :
Even as we came, with childhood's trust,
Wide-eyed we go, to Thee
Who holdest in Thy sacred dust
The heavenly Springs to be.

A MAY-DAY CAROL.

WHAT is the loveliest light that Spring
 Rosily parting her robe of gray
 Girdled with leaflet green, can fling
 Over the fields where her white feet stray?
 What is the merriest promise of May
 Flung o'er the dew-drenched April flowers?
 Tell me, you on the pear-tree spray—
 Carol of birds between the showers.

What can life at its lightest bring
 Better than this on its brightest day?
 How should we fetter the white-throat's wing
 Wild with joy of its woodland way?
 Sweet, should love for an hour delay,
 Swift, while the primrose-time is ours!
 What is the lover's royallest lay?—
 Carol of birds between the showers.

A MAY-DAY CAROL.

What is the murmur of bees a-swing?

What is the laugh of a child at play?

What is the song that the angels sing?

(Where were the tune could the sweet notes
stay

Longer than this, to kiss and betray?)

Nay, on the blue sky's topmost towers,

What is the song of the seraphim? Say—

Carol of birds between the showers.

Thread the stars on a silver string,

(So did they sing in Bethlehem's bowers!)

Mirth for a little one, grief for a king,

Carol of birds between the showers.

THE CALL OF THE SPRING.

COME, choose your road and away, my lad,
Come, choose your road and away !
We'll out of the town by the road's bright crown
As it dips to the dazzling day.
It's a long white road for the weary ;
But it rolls through the heart of the May.

Though many a road would merrily ring
To the tramp of your marching feet,
All roads are one from the day that's done,
And the miles are swift and sweet,
And the graves of your friends are the mile-stones
To the land where all roads meet.

But the call that you hear this day, my lad,
Is the Spring's old bugle of mirth
When the year's green fire in a soul's desire
Is brought like a rose to the birth ;
And knights ride out to adventure
As the flowers break out of the earth.

Over the sweet-smelling mountain-passes
The clouds lie brightly curled ;
The wild-flowers cling to the crags and swing
With cataract-dews impearled ;
And the way, the way that you choose this day
Is the way to the end of the world.

It rolls from the golden long ago
To the land that we ne'er shall find ;
And it's uphill here, but it's downhill there,
For the road is wise and kind,
And all rough places and cheerless faces
Will soon be left behind.

Come, choose your road and away, away,
We'll follow the gypsy sun ;
For it's soon, too soon to the end of the day,
And the day is well begun ;
And the road rolls on through the heart of the May,
And there's never a May but one.

There's a fir-wood here, and a dog-rose there,
And a note of the mating dove ;
And a glimpse, maybe, of the warm blue sea,
And the warm white clouds above ;
And warm to your breast in a tenderer nest
Your sweetheart's little glove.

There's not much better to win, my lad,
There's not much better to win !
You have lived, you have loved, you have fought, you
have proved
The worth of folly and sin ;
So now come out of the City's rout,
Come out of the dust and the din.

Come out,—a bundle and stick is all
You'll need to carry along,
If your heart can carry a kindly word,
And your lips can carry a song ;
You may leave the lave to the keep o' the grave,
If your lips can carry a song !

*Come, choose your road and away, my lad,
Come, choose your road and away !
We'll out of the town by the road's bright crown,
As it dips to the sapphire day !
All roads may meet at the world's end,
But, hey for the heart of the May !
Come, choose your road and away, dear lad,
Come choose your road and away.*

A DEVONSHIRE DITTY.

I.

IN a leafy lane of Devon
There's a cottage that I know,
Then a garden—then, a gray old crumbling wall,
And the wall's the wall of heaven
(Where I hardly care to go)
And there isn't any fiery sword at all.

II.

BUT I never went to heaven.
There was right good reason why,
For they sent a shining angel to me there,
An angel, down in Devon,
(Clad in muslin by the bye)
With the halo of the sunshine on her hair.

III.

Ah, whate'er the darkness covers,
And whate'er we sing or say,
Would you climb the wall of heaven an hour too soon
If you knew a place for lovers
Where the apple-blossoms stray
Out of heaven to sway and whisper to the moon?

IV.

When we die—we'll think of Devon
Where the garden's all aglow
With the flowers that stray across the gray old wall :
Then we'll climb it, out of heaven,
From the other side you know,
Straggle over it from heaven
With the apple-blossom snow,
Tumble back again to Devon
Laugh and love as long ago,
Where there isn't any fiery sword at all.

BACCHUS AND THE PIRATES.

HALF a hundred terrible pig-tails, pirates famous in
song and story,

Hoisting the old black flag once more, in a palmy
harbour of Caribbee,

"Farewell" we waved to our negro lasses, and chorus-
sing out to the billows of glory,

Billows a-glitter with rum and gold, we followed the
sunset over the sea.

While earth goes round, let rum go round,

Our capstan song we sung :

Half a hundred broad-sheet pirates

When the world was young !

Sea-roads plated with pieces of eight that rolled to a
heaven by rum made mellow,

Heaved and coloured our barque's black nose where
the Lascar sang to a twinkling star,

And the tangled bow-sprit plunged and dipped its point
in the West's wild red and yellow,
Till the curved white moon crept out astern like a
naked knife from a blue cymar.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
Our capstan song we sung :
Half a hundred terrible pirates
When the world was young !*

Half a hundred tarry pig-tails, Teach, the chewer of
glass, had taught us,
Taught us to balance the plank ye walk, your little
plank-bridge to Kingdom Come :
Half a score had sailed with Flint, and a dozen or so
the devil had brought us
Back from the pit where Blackbeard lay, in Beelzebub's
bosom, a-screech for rum.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
Our capstan song we sung :
Half a hundred piping pirates
When the world was young !*

There was Captain Hook (of whom ye have heard—so
called from his terrible cold steel twister,
His own right hand having gone to a shark with a
taste for skippers on pirate-trips),
There was Silver himself, with his cruel crutch, and the
blind man Pew, with a phiz like a blister,
Gouged and white and dreadfully dried in the reek
of a thousand burning ships.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
Our capstan song we sung :
Half a hundred cut-throat pirates
When the world was young !*

With our silver buckles and French cocked hats and
our skirted coats (they were growing greener,
But green! and gold look well when spliced ! We'd
trimmed 'em up wi' some fine fresh lace)
Bravely over the seas we danced to the horn-pipe tune
of a concertina,
Cutlasses jetting beneath our skirts and cambric
handkerchiefs all in place.

*While earth goes round let rum go round,
Our capstan song we sung :
Half a hundred elegant pirates
When the world was young !*

And our black prow grated, one golden noon, on the
happiest isle of the Happy Islands,
An isle of Paradise, fair as a gem, on the sparkling
breast of the wine-dark deep,
An isle of blossom and yellow sand, and enchanted
vines on the purple highlands,
Wi' grapes like melons, nay clustering suns, a-sprawl'
over cliffs in their noonday sleep.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
Our capstan song we sung :
Half a hundred dream-struck pirates
When the world was young !*

And lo ! on the soft warm edge of the sand, where the
sea like wine in a golden noggin
Creamed, and the rainbow-bubbles clung to his flame-
red hair, a white youth lay,
Sleeping ; and now, as his drowsy grip relaxed, the cup
that he squeezed his grog in
Slipped from his hand and its purple dregs were
mixed with the flames and flakes of spray.

*He'd only a leopard-skin around
His chest, whereas we sung :
Half a hundred diffident pirates
When the world was young !*

And we suddenly saw (had we seen them before?
They were coloured like sand or the pelt on
his shoulders)

His head was pillowed on two great leopards, whose
breathing rose and sank with his own ;
Now a pirate is bold, but the vision was rum and would
call for rum in the best of beholders,
And it seemed we had seen Him before, in a dream,
with that flame-red hair and that vine-leaf crown.

*And the earth went round, and the rum went round,
And softer now we sung :
Half a hundred awe-struck pirates
When the world was young !*

Now Timothy Hook (of whom ye have heard with his
talon of steel) our doughty skipper,
A man that, in youth being brought up pious, had
many a book on his cabin-shelf,
Suddenly caught at a comrade's hand with the tearing
claws of his cold steel flipper
And cried, "Great Thunder and Brimstone, boys, I've
hit it at last ! 'Tis *Bacchus himself*."

*And the earth went round, and the rum went round,
And never a word we sung :
Half a hundred tottering pirates
When the world was young !*

He flung his French cocked hat i' the foam (though its
lace was the best of his wearing apparel):

We stared at him—Bacchus! the sea reeled round
like a wine-vat splashing with purple dreams,
And the sunset-skies were dashed with blood of the
grape as the sun like a new-staved barrel
Flooded the tumbling West with wine and spattered
the clouds with crimson gleams.

*And the earth went round, and our heads went round,
And never a word we sung:
Half a hundred staggering pirates
When the world was young!*

Down to the ship for a fishing-net our crafty Hook
sent Silver leaping;
Back he came on his pounding crutch, for all the
world like a kangaroo;
And we caught the net and up to the Sleeper on hands
and knees we all went creeping,
Flung it across him and staked it down! 'Twas the
best of our dreams and the dream was true.

*And the earth went round, and the rum went round,
And loudly now we sung:
Half a hundred jubilant pirates
When the world was young!*

We had caught our god, and we got him aboard ere he
 woke (he was more than a little heavy) ;
 Glittering, beautiful, flushed he lay in the lurching
 bows of the old black barque,
As the sunset died and the white moon dawned, and
 we saw on the island a star-bright bevy
Of naked Bacchanals stealing to watch through the
 whispering vines in the purple dark !

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 Our capstan song we sung :
Half a hundred innocent pirates
 When the world was young !*

Beautiful under the sailing moon, in the tangled net,
 with the leopards beside him,
Snared like a wild young red-lipped merman, wilful,
 petulant, flushed he lay ;
While Silver and Hook in their big sea-boots and their
 boat-cloaks guarded and gleefully eyed him,
Thinking what Bacchus might do for a seaman, like
 standing him drinks, as a man might say.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 We sailed away and sung :
Half a hundred fanciful pirates
 When the world was young !*

All the grog that ever was heard of, gods, was it stowed
in our sure possession ?

O, the pictures that broached the skies and poured
their colours across our dreams !

O, the thoughts that tapped the sunset, and rolled like
a great torchlight procession

Down our throats in a glory of glories, a roaring
splendour of golden streams !

And the earth went round, and the stars went round,

As we hauled the sheets and sung :

Half a hundred infinite pirates

When the world was young !

Beautiful, white, at the break of day, He woke and,
the net in a smoke dissolving,

He rose like a flame, with his yellow-eyed pards and
his flame-red hair like a windy dawn,

And the crew kept back, respectful like, till the leopards
advanced with their eyes revolving,

Then up the rigging went Silver and Hook, and the
rest of us followed with case-knives drawn.

While earth goes round, let rum go round,

Our cross-tree song we sung :

Half a hundred terrified pirates

When the world was young !

And "Take me home to my happy island!" he says.

"Not I," sings Hook, "by thunder;

We'll take you home to a happier isle, our palmy
harbour of Caribbee!"

"You won't?" says Bacchus, and quick as a dream the
planks of the deck just heaved asunder,

And a mighty Vine came straggling up that grew
from the depths of the wine-dark sea.

And the sea went round, and the skies went round,

As our cross-tree song we sung:

Half a hundred horrified pirates

When the world was young!

We were anchored fast as an oak on land, and the
branches clutched and the tendrils quickened,

And bound us writhing like snakes to the spars! Ay,
we hacked with our knives at the boughs in vain,

And Bacchus laughed loud on the decks below, as ever
the tough sprays tightened and thickened,

And the blazing hours went by, and we gaped with
thirst and our ribs were racked with pain.

And the skies went round, and the sea swam round,

And we knew not what we sung:

Half a hundred lunatic pirates

When the world was young!

Bunch upon bunch of sunlike grapes, as we writhed and
struggled and raved and strangled,
Bunch upon bunch of gold and purple daubed its
bloom on our baked black lips.
Clustering grapes, O, bigger than pumpkins, just out
of reach they bobbed and dangled
Over the vine-entangled sails of that most dumb-
founded of pirate ships!

*And the sun went round, and the moon came round,
And mocked us where we hung:
Half a hundred maniac pirates
When the world was young!*

Over the waters the white moon winked its bruised old
eye at our bowery prison,
When suddenly we were aware of a light such as
never a moon or a ship's lamp throws,
And a shallop of pearl, like a Nautilus shell, came
shimmering up as by magic arisen,
With sails of silk and a glory around it that turned
the sea to a rippling rose.

*And our heads went round, and the stars went round,
At the song that cruiser sung:
Half a hundred goggle-eyed pirates
When the world was young!*

Half a hundred rose-white Bacchanals hauled the ropes
of that rosy cruiser !

Over the seas they came and laid their little white
hands on the old black barque ;
And Bacchus he ups and he steps aboard : " Hi, stop !"
cries Hook, " you frantic old boozier !
Belay, below there, don't you go and leave poor
pirates to die in the dark !"

*And the moon went round, and the stars went round,
As they all pushed off and sung :
Half a hundred ribbonless Bacchanals
When the world was young !*

Over the seas they went and Bacchus he stands, with
his yellow-eyed leopards beside him,
High on the poop of rose and pearl, and kisses his
hand to us, pleasant as pie !
While the Bacchanals danced to their tambourines, and
the vine-leaves flew, and Hook just eyed him
Once, as a man that was brought up pious, and
scornfully hollers, " Well, you aint shy !"

*For all around him, vine-leaf crowned,
The wild white Bacchanals flung !
Nor it wasn't a sight for respectable pirates
When the world was young !*

All around that rainbow-Nautilus rippled the bloom of
a thousand roses,

Nay, but the sparkle of fairy sea-nymphs breasting a
fairy-like sea of wine,

Swimming around it in murmuring thousands, with white
arms tossing ; till—all that *we* knows is

The light went out, and the night was dark, and the
grapes had burst and their juice was—brine !

*And the vines that bound our bodies round
Were plain wet ropes that clung :
Squeezing the light out o' fifty pirates
When the world was young !*

.

Over the seas in the pomp of dawn a king's ship came
with her proud flag flying ;

Cloud upon cloud we watched her tower with her
belts and her crowded zones of sail ;

And an A.B. perched in a white crow's nest, with a
brass-rimmed spy-glass quietly spying,

As we swallowed the lumps in our choking throats
and uttered our last faint feeble hail !

*And our heads went round as the ship went round,
And we thought how coves had swung :
All for playing at broad-sheet pirates
When the world was young !*

Half a hundred trembling corsairs, all cut loose, but a
trifle giddy,

We lands on their trim white decks at last and the
bo'sun he whistles us good hot grog,
And we tries to confess, but there wasn't a soul from
the Admiral's self to the gold-laced middy
But says, "They're delirious still, poor chaps," and
the Cap'n he enters the fact in his log,

*That his boat's crew found us nearly drowned
In a barrel without a bung—
Half a hundred suffering sea-cooks
When the world was young!*

So we sailed by Execution Dock, where the swinging
pirates haughty and scornful
Rattled their chains, and on Margate beach we came
like a school-treat safe to land ;
And one of us took to religion at once ; and the rest of
the crew, tho' their hearts were mournful,
Capered about as Christy Minstrels, while Hook
conducted the big brass band.

*And the sun went round, and the moon went round,
And, O, 'twas a thought that stung !
There was none to believe we were broad-sheet pirates
When the world was young !*

Ah, yet (if ye stand me a noggin of rum) shall the old
Blue Dolphin echo the story !

We'll hoist the white cross-bones again in our palmy
harbour of Caribbee !

We'll wave farewell to our negro lasses and, chorussing
out to the billows of glory,

Billows a-glitter with rum and gold, we'll follow the
sunset over the sea !

While earth goes round, let rum go round !

O, sing it as we sung !

Half a hundred terrible pirates

When the world was young !

THE NEWSPAPER BOY.

I.

ELF of the City, a lean little hollow-eyed boy
Ragged and tattered, but lithe as a slip of the Spring,
Under the lamp-light he runs with a reckless joy
Shouting a murderer's doom or the death of a King.
Out of the darkness he leaps like a wild strange hint,
Herald of tragedy, comedy, crime and despair,
Waving a poster that hurls you, in fierce black print
One word *Mystery*, under the lamp's white glare.

II.

Elf of the night of the City he darts with his crew
Out of a vaporous furnace of colour that wreathes
Magical letters a-flicker from crimson to blue
High overhead. All round him the mad world
seethes.

Hansoms, like cantering beetles, with diamond eyes
Run through the moons of it; busses in yellow and
red
Hoot; and St Paul's is a bubble afloat in the skies,
Watching the pale moths flit and the dark death's
head.

III.

Painted and powdered they shimmer and rustle and
stream
Westward, the night moths, masks of the Magdalen!
See,
Puck of the revels, he leaps through the sinister dream
Waving his elfin evangel of *Mystery*,
Puck of the bubble or dome of their scoffing or trust,
Puck of the fairy-like tower with the clock in its face,
Puck of an Empire that whirls on a pellet of dust
Bearing his elfin device thro' the splendours of space.

IV.

Mystery—is it the scribble of doom on the dark,
Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, again?
Mystery,—is it a scrap of remembrance, a spark
Burning still in the fog of a blind world's brain?

Elf of the gossamer tangles of shadow and light,
Wild electrical webs and the battle that rolls
League upon perishing league thro' the ravenous night,
Breaker on perishing breaker of human souls.

V.

Soaked in the colours, a flake of the flying spray
Flung over wreckage and yeast of the murderous town,
Onward he flaunts it, innocent, vicious and gay,
Prophet of prayers that are stifled and loves that
drown,
Urchin and sprat of the City that roars like a sea
Surging around him in hunger and splendour and
shame,
Cruelty, luxury, madness, he leaps in his glee
Out of the mazes of mist and the vistas of flame.

VI.

Ragged and tattered he scurries away in the gloom :
Over the thundering traffic a moment his cry
Mystery ! Mystery !—reckless of death and doom
Rings ; and the great wheels roll and the world
goes by.

Lost, is it lost, that hollow-eyed flash of the light?—

Poor little face flying by with the word that saves, .

Pale little mouth of the mask of the measureless night,

Shrilling the heart of it, lost like the foam on its
waves !

THE TWO WORLDS.

THIS outer world is but the pictured scroll
 Of worlds within the soul,
 A coloured chart, a blazoned missal-book
 Whereon who rightly look
 May spell the splendours with their mortal eyes
 And steer to Paradise.

O, well for him that knows and early knows
 In his own soul the rose
 Secretly burgeons, of this earthly flower
 The heavenly paramour :
 And all these fairy dreams of green-wood fern,
 These waves that break and yearn,
 Shadows and hieroglyphs, hills, clouds and seas,
 Faces and flowers and trees,
 Terrestrial picture-parables, relate
 Each to its heavenly mate.

O, well for him that finds in sky and sea
 This two-fold mystery,

And loses not (as painfully he spells
The fine-spun syllables)
The cadences, the burning inner gleam,
The poet's heavenly dream.

Well for the poet if this earthly chart
Be printed in his heart,
When to his world of spirit woods and seas
With eager face he flees
And treads the untrodden fields of unknown flowers
And threads the angelic bowers,
And hears that unheard nightingale whose moan
Trembles within his own,
And lovers murmuring in the leafy lanes
Of his own joys and pains.

For though he voyages further than the flight
Of earthly day and night,
Traversing to the sky's remotest ends
A world that he transcends,
Safe, he shall hear the hidden breakers roar
Against the mystic shore ;
Shall roam the yellow sands where sirens bare
Their breasts and wind their hair ;
Shall with their perfumed tresses blind his eyes,
And still possess the skies.

He, where the deep unearthly jungles are,
 Beneath his Eastern star
Shall pass the tawny lion in his den
 And cross the quaking fen.
He learnt his path (and treads it undefiled)
 When, as a little child,
He bent his head with long and loving looks
 O'er earthly picture-books.
His earthly love nestles against his side,
 His young celestial guide.

GORSE.

BETWEEN my face and the warm blue sky
 The crisp white clouds go sailing,
 And the only sound is the sound of your breathing,
 The song of a bird and the sea's long sigh.

Here, on the downs, as a tale re-told
 The sprays of the gorse are a-blaze with gold,
 As of old, on the sea-washed hills of my boyhood,
 Breathing the same sweet scent as of old.

Under a ragged golden spray
 The great sea sparkles far away,
 Beautiful, bright, as my heart remembers
 Many a dazzle of waves in May.

Long ago as I watched them shine
 Under the boughs of fir and pine,
 Like I watch them to-day and wonder,
 Here, with my love and warm in mine.

The soft wings pass that we used to chase,
Dreams that I dreamed had left not a trace,
 The same, the same, with the bars of crimson,
The green-veined white, with its floating grace,

The same to the least bright fleck on their wings !
And I close my eyes, and a lost bird sings,
 And a far sea sighs, and the old sweet fragrance
Wraps me round with the dear dead springs,

Wraps me round with the springs to be
When lovers that think not of you or me
 Laugh, but our eyes will be closed in darkness,
Closed to the sky and the gorse and the sea,

And the same great glory of ragged gold
Once more, once more, as a tale re-told
 Shall whisper their hearts with the same sweet fragrance
And their warm hands cling, as of old, as of old.

Dead and un-born, the same blue skies
Cover us ! Love, as I read your eyes,
 Do I not know whose love enfolds us,
As we fold the past in our memories,

Past, present, future, the old and the new?
From the depths of the grave a cry breaks through
And trembles, a sky-lark blind in the azure,
The depths of the all-enfolding blue.

O, resurrection of folded years
Deep in our hearts, with your smiles and tears,
Dead and un-born shall not He remember
Who folds our cry in His heart, and hears.

FOR THE EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY OF
GEORGE MEREDITH.

A HEALTH, a ringing health, unto the king
Of all our hearts to-day ! But what proud song
Should follow on the thought, nor do him wrong ?
Except the sea were harp, each mirthful string
The lovely lightning of the nights of Spring,
And Dawn the lonely listener, glad and grave
With colours of the sea-shell and the wave
In brightening eye and cheek, there is none to sing !

Drink to him, as men upon an Alpine peak
Brim one immortal cup of crimson wine,
And into it drop one pure cold crust of snow,
Then hold it up, too rapturously to speak
And drink—to the mountains, line on glittering line,
Surging away into the sunset-glow.

IN MEMORY OF SWINBURNE.

I.

APRIL from shore to shore, from sea to sea,
April in heaven and on the springing spray
Buoyant with birds that sing to welcome May
And April in those eyes that mourn for thee :
"This is my singing month ; my hawthorn tree
Burgeons once more," we seemed to hear thee say,
"This is my singing month : my fingers stray
Over the lute. What shall the music be ?"

And April answered with too great a song
For mortal lips to sing or hearts to hear,
Heard only of that high invisible throng
For whom thy song makes April all the year !
"My singing month, what bringest thou ?" Her breath
Swooned with all music, and she answered—"Death."

II.

Ah, but on earth,—“can’st thou, too, die,”
Low she whispers, “lover of mine?”
April, queen over earth and sky
Whispers, her trembling lashes shine :
“Wings of the sea, good-bye, good-bye,
Down to the dim sea-line.”

Home to the heart of thine old-world lover,
Home to thy “fair green-girdled” sea !
There shall thy soul with the sea-birds hover,
Free of the deep as their wings are free ;
Free, for the grave-flowers only cover
This, the dark cage of thee.

Thee, the storm-bird, nightingale-souled,
Brother of Sappho, the seas reclaim !
Age upon age have the great waves rolled
Mad with her music, exultant, aflame ;
Thee, thee too, shall their glory enfold,
Lit with thy snow-winged fame.

Back, thro' the years, fleets the sea-bird's wing :

Sappho, of old time, once,—ah, hark !

So did he love her of old and sing !

Listen, he flies to her, back thro' the dark !

Sappho, of old time, once. . . . Yea, Spring

Calls him home to her, hark !

Sappho, long since, in the years far sped,

Sappho, I loved thee ! Did I not seem

Fosterling only of earth ? I have fled,

Fled to thee, sister. Time is a dream !

Shelley is here with us ! Death lies dead !

Ah, how the bright waves gleam.

Wide was the cage-door, idly swinging ;

April touched me and whispered "come."

Out and away to the great deep winging,

Sister, I flashed to thee over the foam,

Out to the sea of Eternity, singing

"Mother, thy child comes home."

Ah, but how shall we welcome May
Here where the wing of song droops low,
Here by the last green swinging spray
Brushed by the sea-bird's wings of snow,
We that gazed on his glorious way
Out where the great winds blow?

*Here upon earth—"can'st thou, too, die,
Lover of life and lover of mine?"
April, conquering earth and sky
Whispers, her trembling lashes shine:
"Wings of the sea, good-bye, good-bye,
Down to the dim sea-line."*

ON THE DEATH OF FRANCIS
THOMPSON.

I.

How grandly glow the bays
Purpureally enwound
With those rich thorns, the brows
How infinitely crowned
That now thro' Death's dark house
Have passed with royal gaze :
Purpureally enwound
How grandly glow the bays.

II.

Sweet, sweet and three-fold sweet,
Pulsing with three-fold pain,
Where the lark fails of flight
Soared the celestial strain ;

Beyond the sapphire height
 Flew the gold-wingéd feet,
 Beautiful, pierced with pain,
 Sweet, sweet and three-fold sweet ;

III.

And where *Is not* and *Is*
 Are wed in one sweet Name,
 And the world's rootless vine
 With dew of stars a-flame
 Laughs, from those deep divine
 Impossibilities,
 Our reason all to shame—
This cannot be, but is ;

IV.

Into the Vast, the Deep
 Beyond all mortal sight,
 The Nothingness that conceived
 The worlds of day and night,
 The Nothingness that heaved
 Pure sides in virgin sleep,
 Brought out of Darkness, light ;
 And man from out the Deep.

v.

Into that Mystery
Let not thine hand be thrust :
Nothingness is a world
Thy science well may trust . . .
But lo, a leaf unfurled,
Nay, a cry mocking thee
From the first grain of dust—
I am, yet cannot be !

vi.

Adventuring un-afraid
Into that last deep shrine,
Must not the child-heart see
Its deepest symbol shine,
The world's Birth-mystery,
Whereto the suns are shade ?
Lo, the white breast divine—
The Holy Mother-maid !

vii.

How miss that Sacrifice
That cross of Yea and Nay
That paradox of heaven
Whose palms point either way,

Through each a nail being driven
 That the arms out-span the skies
 And our earth-dust this day
 Out-sweeten Paradise.

VIII.

We part the seamless robe,
 Our wisdom would divide
 The raiment of the King,
 Our spear is in His side,
 Even while the angels sing
 Around our perishing globe,
 Lo, Death re-knits in pride
 The seamless purple robe.

.

IX.

*How grandly glow the bays
 Purpureally entwound
 With those rich thorns, the brows
 How infinitely crowned
 That now thro' Death's dark house
 Have passed with royal gaze :
 Purpureally entwound
 How grandly glow the bays.*

IN MEMORY OF MEREDITH.

I.

HIGH on the mountains, who stands proudly, clad with
the light of May,
Rich as the dawn, deep-hearted as night, diamond-
bright as day,
Who, while the slopes of the beautiful valley throb with
our muffled tread
Who, with the hill-flowers wound in her tresses, welcomes
our deathless dead?

II.

Is it not she whom he sought so long thro' the high
lawns dewy and sweet,
Up thro' the crags and the glittering snows faint-flushed
with her rosy feet,

Is it not she—the queen of our night—crowned by the
unseen sun,
Artemis, she that can see the light, when light upon earth
is none?

III.

Huntress, queen of the dark of the world (no darker at
night than noon)
Beauty immortal and undefiled, the Eternal sun's white
moon,
Only by thee and thy silver shafts for a flash can our
hearts discern,
Pierced to the quick, the love, the love that still thro'
the dark doth yearn.

IV.

What to his soul were the hill-flowers, what the gold at
the break of day
Shot thro' the red-stemmed firs to the lake where the
swimmer clove his way,
What were the quivering harmonies showered from the
heaven-tossed heart of the lark,
Artemis, Huntress, what were these but thy keen shafts
cleaving the dark?

v.

Frost of the hedge-rows, flash of the jasmine, sparkle of
dew on the leaf,
Seas lit wide by the summer lightning, shafts from thy
diamond sheaf,
Deeply they pierced him, deeply he loved thee, now
has he found thy soul,
Artemis, thine, in this bridal peal, where we hear but
the death-bell toll.

A FRIEND OF CARLYLE.

I.

MASTER of arts, for all those years
Among these lonely Devon moors,
(Lonely to you, but smiles and tears
Have crowded thro' my school-house doors)
These garden walls would hardly suit
A man on great ambitions bent,
And yet my trees have borne some fruit
Of grateful, ay and proud content.

II.

Drinking the sunlight as he spoke,
Hale in September as in May,
Across his clear frank face there broke
A smile that seemed to praise and pray,
Half rapture, half adoring love,
And steadfast as the soul of truth
Which, though the thick grey gleamed above,
Brightened his eyes with deeper youth.

III.

For think, he said, each year a score
Of lives commended to my trust,
(’Tis never less and sometimes more)
It leaves the mind no time to rust :
They come—just when for good or ill
My teaching kindles or controls.
From first to last my striving will
Has helped to train ten hundred souls.

IV.

Forgive me, Thou who knowest all
The barren and the unhelpful days ;
For still to Thee my heart would call
Before I went my morning ways,
Or turned my pencilled old Carlyle,
My guide thro’ doubts of long ago,
And thought, to-day some word or smile
May teach them more than aught I know.

V.

For I did doubt : though all my youth
To one great ministry aspired,
I saw the fiery sword of truth
Guarding the portal I desired.

The God whom Science could destroy
I slowly followed to his tomb,
Then turned, alone, a friendless boy
To wrestle with the o'erwhelming gloom.

VI.

For truth, for truth I strove, and yet
Could I forget the tender pride
Which those who loved me had so set
On this my work, or cast aside
The years of labour (spent to learn
That all the learning was a dream)
Thus on the very verge to turn
And meet—Love's eyes with tears a-gleam?

VII.

And sacrifices had been made
To give me . . . Well, the tale is old :
But even your modern men are swayed
By fears on one great subject—"gold" ;
And so, you'll understand, it meant
My "whole career," and check your smile,
When, having lost my God, I went
To my great hero-soul—Carlyle.

VIII.

They chatter of him? Let that be!
I'd only seen him once: he stood
Crowned by his university,
Wearing the gorgeous robes and hood.
* Beneath him surged a cheering crowd
Of young men straining tow'rds his face.
A little flushed, a little proud,
He took his throne in that high place.

IX.

O, what a drama undiscerned
Swelled to its climax in that hour,
Where he the poor Scotch peasant burned
Before us with a seraph's power,
A nation's laurels on his brow
While, far away, Death's levelled dart
Unseen, unfeared, undreamed, e'en now
Struck at his heart's beloved heart.

X.

We clamoured for our king to speak!
He rose. A breathless silence fell.
The flush of fame was on his cheek.
He bore that regal splendour well,

Then—suddenly—cast the robes aside !
Our hearts burned and our eyes grew wet :
He spoke as at his own hearth-side,
But O, we knew him kinglier yet.

XI.

Still through and through me thrills the fire,
Unquenched by all the following years,
Which bade us trust the truth, aspire,
And blinded us with god-like tears !
That face had suffered in the same
Dark night, through which I still must grope ;
But, lit with some transfiguring flame,
He closed—*We bid you be of hope.*

XII.

And so I went to him. He heard,
O, kindly as a father might ;
And, here and there, some burning word
Flashed sudden lightnings thro' my night :
And, as he spoke, I felt and saw
The night was only where I lay
In one dark gulf, and truth's own law
Would lead me tow'rd's the perfect day.

XIII.

"As from the blind seed springs the flower,
As from the acorn soars the oak,
From darkness into heaven may tower
The soul of man," he gently spoke,
"From Time into the Eternal Love!
Rally the might within thee, trust
In truth, and those broad heavens above,
They will not doom thee to the dust."

.

XIV.

Troubles enough there were indeed
Before I caught the first great gleam.
It came when I was most in need
And, like one waking from a dream,
To a new heaven and a new earth
I saw and, kneeling, wept for joy—
Death bringing heavenly life to birth
In bliss which nothing can destroy.

XV.

It was the night my loved one died,
The year our child, who lives, was born!
All night upon my knees I cried
To God to change His world ere morn,

"Roll back Thy stars, bring back my dead,
And take what else Thou wilt away ;
But bring not back to me," I said,
"The hopeless horror of the day."

XVI.

I could not live, I could not die,
My fate was not in my control :
I only knew that this wild cry
Would, with the dawn, destroy my soul,
If, with that dawn, our rutted road,
The same dark trees, the same dark farms
Should mock me ! "God, too great Thy load !"
Then—round me swept the Eternal arms.

XVII.

That once, if never in my life
Again, I felt them, as the dawn
Came, with a deeper wonder rife
Than aught in that old world withdrawn :
I felt His love around me furled,
His pity, gentle as the dew,
And plucked the blind aside. *The world*
Was changed. His earth was made anew.

XVIII.

*A pure white mantle blotted out
The world I used to know :
There was no scarlet in the sky
Or on the hills below,
Gently as mercy out of heaven
Came down the healing snow.*

XIX.

*The trees that were so dark and bare
Stood up in radiant white,
And the road forgot its furrowed care
As day forgets the night,
And the new heavens and the new earth
Lay robed in dazzling light.*

XX.

*And every flake that fell from heaven
Was like an angel's kiss,
Or a feather fluttering from the wings
Of some dear soul in bliss
Who gently leaned from that bright world
To soothe the pain of this.*

XXI.

*Oft had I felt for some brief flash
The heavenly secret glow
In sunsets, traced some hieroglyph
In Nature—flowers that blow
And perish ; tender, climbing boughs ;
The stars—and then—'twould go.*

XXII.

*But here I felt within my soul,
Clear as on field and tree,
The falling of the heavenly snow,
A twofold mystery,
And one was meant to bless the world,
And one was meant for me.*

XXIII.

And at the grave-side of my love
Once more thro' Nature did I see
Unspeakable, O heaven above,
What shining from Eternity !

They lowered the coffin to its place,
And o'er the grave the great sun smiled
Full in—that lifted, laughing face,
There, in the nurse's arms, the child.

XXIV.

O, what are words or waves of the sea
Save for the Power that through them shines,
The Soul that gives them unity
And sends its glory through the lines?
Will art—nay, science—deem it vain,
That world-wide flash whereby I knew
His gentle touch in sun and rain,
His mercy gliding in the dew?

XXV.

Since then, the Power behind the world
Has never left me, and I find
In every April fern unfurled
Some vision of the Eternal mind:
The clouds affirm their Charioteer,
The hills demand His higher throne,
And year cries out to fleeting year
The Everlasting claims His own.

XXVI.

The God I worshipped when a boy
I lost ; and now that fifty years
Have passed with all they could destroy
Of all my hopes and dreams and fears,
Full fifty years, in this dear place
Where all those generations trod,
Why (and heaven lit his lifted face)
Now, there seems nothing else but God.

THE TESTIMONY OF ART.

As earth, sad earth, thrusts many a gloomy cape
 Into the sea's bright colour and living glee,
 So do we strive to embay that mystery
 Which earthly hands must ever let escape ;
 The Word we seek for is the golden shape
 That shall enshrine the Soul we cannot see,
 Atemporal chalice of Eternity
 Purple with beating blood of the hallowed grape.

Once was it wine and sacramental bread
 Whereby we knew the power that through Him smiled
 When, in one still small utterance, He hurled
 The Eternities beneath His feet and said
 With lips, O meek as any little child,
Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

THE SCHOLARS.

WHERE is the scholar whose clear mind can hold
 The floral text of one sweet April mead ?—
 The flowing lines, which few can spell indeed
 Though most will note the scarlet and the gold
 Around the flourishing capitals grandly scrolled ;
 But ah, the subtle cadences that need
 The lover's heart, the lover's heart to read,
 And ah, the songs unsung, the tales un-told.

Poor fools-capped scholars—grammar keeps us close,
 The primers thrall us, and our eyes grow dim :
 When will old Master Science hear the call,
 Bid us run free with life in every limb
 To breathe the poems and hear the last red rose
 Gossiping over God's gray garden-wall ?

RESURRECTION.

ONCE more I hear the everlasting sea
Breathing beneath the mountain's fragrant breast,
Come unto Me, come unto Me,
And I will give you rest.

We have destroyed the Temple and in three days
He hath rebuilt it—all things are made new :
And hark what wild throats pour His praise
Beneath the boundless blue.

We plucked down all His altars, cried aloud
And gashed ourselves for little gods of clay !
Yon floating cloud was but a cloud,
The May no more than May.

We plucked down all His altars, left not one
Save where, perchance (and ah, the joy was fleet),
We laid our garlands in the sun
At the white Sea-born's feet.

We plucked down all His altars, not to make
The small praise greater, but the great praise less,
We sealed all fountains where the soul could slake
Its thirst and weariness.

"Love" was too small, too human to be found
In that transcendent source whence love was born :
We talked of "forces" : heaven was crowned
With philosophic thorn.

"Your God is in your image," we cried, but O,
'Twas only man's own deepest heart ye gave,
Knowing that He transcended all ye know,
While we—we dug His grave.

Denied Him even the crown on our own brow,
E'en these poor symbols of His loftier reign,
Levelled His Temple with the dust, and now
He is risen, He is risen again,

Risen, like this resurrection of the year,
This grand ascension of the choral spring,
Which those harp-crowded heavens bend to hear
And meet upon the wing.

"He is dead," we cried, and even amid that gloom
The wintry veil was rent ! The new-born day
Showed us the Angel seated in the tomb
And the stone rolled away.

It is the hour ! We challenge heaven above
Now, to deny our slight ephemeral breath
Joy, anguish, and that everlasting love
Which triumphs over death.

A JAPANESE LOVE-SONG.

I.

THE young moon is white,
But the willows are blue :
Your small lips are red,
But the great clouds are gray :
The waves are so many
That whisper to you ;
But my love is only
One flight of spray.

II.

The bright drops are many,
The dark wave is one :
The dark wave subsides,
And the bright sea remains !

And wherever, O singing
Maid, you may run,
You are one with the world
For all your pains.

III.

Though the great skies are dark,
And your small feet are white,
Though your wide eyes are blue
And the closed poppies red,
Tho' the kisses are many
That colour the night,
They are linked like pearls
On one golden thread.

IV.

Were the gray clouds not made
For the red of your mouth ;
The ages for flight
Of the butterfly years ;
The sweet of the peach
For the pale lips of drouth,
The sunlight of smiles
For the shadow of tears ?

v.

Love, Love is the thread
That has pierced them with bliss !
All their hues are but notes
In one world-wide tune :
Lips, willows, and waves,
We are one as we kiss,
And your face and the flowers
Faint away in the moon.

THE TWO PAINTERS.

(A TALE OF OLD JAPAN.)

I.

YOICHI TENKO, the painter,
Dwelt by the purple sea,
Painting the peacock islands
Under his willow-tree :
Also in temples he painted
Dragons of old Japan,
With a child to look at the pictures—
Little O Kimi San.

Kimi, the child of his brother,
Bright as the moon in May,
White as a lotus lily,
Pink as a plum-tree spray,

Linking her soft arm round him
Sang to his heart for an hour,
Kissed him with ripples of laughter
And lips of the cherry flower.

Child of the old pearl-fisher
Lost in his junk at sea,
Kimi was loved of Tenko
As his own child might be,
Yoichi Tenko the painter,
Wrinkled and grey and old,
Teacher of many disciples
That paid for his dreams with gold.

II.

Peonies, peonies crowned the May!
Clad in blue and white array
Came Sawara to the school
Under the silvery willow-tree,
All to learn of Tenko!
Riding on a milk-white mule,
Young and poor and proud was he,
Lissom as a cherry spray
(Peonies, peonies, crowned the day!)
And he rode the golden way
To the school of Tenko.

Swift to learn, beneath his hand
Soon he watched his wonderland
 Growing cloud by magic cloud,
Under the silvery willow-tree
 In the school of Tenko :
Kimi watched him, young and proud,
 Painting by the purple sea,
Lying on the golden sand
Watched his golden wings expand !
(None but Love will understand
 All she hid from Tenko.)

He could paint her tree and flower,
Sea and spray and wizard's tower,
 With one stroke, now hard, now soft,
Under the silvery willow-tree
 In the school of Tenko :
He could fling a bird aloft,
 Splash a dragon in the sea,
Crown a princess in her bower,
With one stroke of magic power ;
And she watched him, hour by hour,
 In the school of Tenko.

Yoichi Tenko, wondering, scanned
All the work of that young hand,

Gazed his kakemonos q'er,
Under the silvery willow-tree
In the school of Tenko :
"I can teach you nothing more,
Thought or craft or mystery ;
Let your golden wings expand,
They will shadow half the land,
All the world's at your command,
Come no more to Tenko."

*Lying on the golden sand,
Kimi watched his wings expand ;
Wept.—He could not understand
Why she wept, said Tenko.*

III.

So, in her blue kimono,
Pale as the sickle moon
Glimmered thro' soft plum-branches
Blue in the dusk of June,
Stole she, willing and waning,
Frightened and unafraid,—
"Take me with you, Sawara,
Over the sea," she said.

Small and sadly beseeching,
Under the willow-tree,
Glimmered her face like a foam-flake
Drifting over the sea :
Pale as a drifting blossom,
Lifted her face to his eyes :
Slowly he gathered and held her
Under the drifting skies.

Poor little face cast backward,
Better to see his own,
Earth and heaven went past them
Drifting : they two, alone
Stood, immortal. He whispered—
“Nothing can part us two !”
Backward her sad little face went
Drifting, and dreamed it true.

“Others are happy,” she murmured,
“Maidens and men I have seen ;
You are my king, Sawara,
O, let me be your queen !
If I am all too lowly,”
Sadly she strove to smile,
“Let me follow your footsteps,
Your slave for a little while.”

Surely, he thought, I have painted
Nothing so fair as this
Moonlit almond blossom
Sweet to fold and kiss,
Brow that is filled with music,
Shell of a faery sea,
Eyes like the holy violets
Brimmed with dew for me.

"Wait for Sawara," he whispered,
"Does not his whole heart yearn
Now to his moon-bright maiden?
Wait, for he will return
Rich as the wave on the moon's path
Rushing to claim his bride!"
So they plighted their promise,
And the ebbing sea-wave sighed.

IV.

Moon and flower and butterfly,
Earth and heaven went drifting by,
Three long years while Kimi dreamed
Under the silvery willow-tree
In the school of Tenko,
Steadfast while the whole world streamed
Past her tow'rds Eternity;

Steadfast till with one great cry,
 Ringing to the gods on high,
Golden wings should blind the sky
 And bring him back to Tenko.

Three long years and nought to say
"Sweet, I come the golden way,
 Riding royally to the school
Under the silvery willow-tree
 Claim my bride of Tenko ;
Silver bells on a milk-white mule,
 Rose-red sails on an emerald sea ! " . . .
Kimi sometimes went to pray
In the temple nigh the bay,
Dreamed all night and gazed all day
 Over the sea from Tenko.

Far away his growing fame
Lit the clouds. No message came
 From the sky, whereon she gazed
Under the silvery willow-tree
 Far away from Tenko !
Small white hands in the temple raised
 Pleaded with the Mystery,—
"Stick of incense in the flame,
Though my love forget my name,

Help him, bless him, all the same,
And . . . bring him back to Tenko ! ”

*Rose-white temple nigh the bay,
Hush ! for Kimi comes to pray,
Dream all night and gaze all day
Over the sea from Tenko.*

v.

So, when the rich young merchant
Showed him his bags of gold,
Yoichi Tenko, the painter,
Gave him her hand to hold,
Said, “ You shall wed him, O Kimi : ”
Softly he lied and smiled—
“ *Yea, for Sawara is wedded !
Let him not mock you, child.* ”

Dumbly she turned and left them,
Never a word or cry
Broke from her lips’ grey petals
Under the drifting sky :
Down to the spray and the rainbows,
Where she had watched him of old
Painting the rose-red islands,
Painting the sand’s wet gold,

Down to their dreams of the sunset,
 Frail as a flower's white ghost,
Lonely and lost she wandered
 Down to the darkening coast ;
Lost in the drifting midnight,
 Weeping, desolate, blind.
Many went out to seek her :
 Never a heart could find.

Yoichi Tenko, the painter,
 Plucked from his willow-tree
Two big paper lanterns
 And ran to the brink of the sea ;
Over his head he held them,
 Crying, and only heard,
Somewhere, out in the darkness,
 The cry of a wandering bird.

VI.

Peonies, peonies thronged the May
When in royal-rich array
 Came Sawara to the school
Under the silvery willow-tree—
 To the school of Tenko !
Silver bells on a milk-white mule,
 Rose-red sails on an emerald sea !

Over the bloom of the cherry spray,
Peonies, peonies dimmed the day ;
And he rode the royal way
Back to Yoichi Tenko.

Yoichi Tenko, half afraid,
Whispered, "Wed some other maid ;
Kimi left me all alone
Under the silvery willow-tree,
Left me," whispered Tenko,
"Kimi had a heart of stone !"—
"Kimi, Kimi ? Who is she ?
Kimi ? Ah—the child that played
Round the willow-tree. She prayed
Often ; and, whate'er I said,
She believed it, Tenko."

He had come to paint anew
Those dim isles of rose and blue,
For a palace far away,
Under the silvery willow-tree—
So he said to Tenko ;
And he painted, day by day,
Golden visions of the sea.

No, he had not come to woo ;
Yet, had Kimi proven true,
Doubtless he had loved her too,
Hardly less than Tenko.

Since the thought was in his head,
He would make his choice and wed ;
And a lovely maid he chose
Under the silvery willow-tree.

"Fairer far," said Tenko.

"Kimi had a twisted nose,
And a foot too small, for me,
And her face was dull as lead !"
"Nay, a flower, be it white or red,
Is a flower," Sawara said !
"So it is," said Tenko.

VII.

Great Sawara, the painter,
Sought, on a day of days,
One of the peacock islands
Out in the sunset haze :
Rose-red sails on the water
Carried him quickly nigh ;
There would he paint him a wonder,
Worthy of Hokusai.

THE TWO PAINTERS.

Lo, as he leapt o'er the creaming
Roses of faery foam,
Out of the green-lipped caverns
Under the isle's blue dome,
White as a drifting snow-flake,
White as the moon's white flame,
White as a ghost from the darkness,
Little O Kimi came.

"Long I have waited, Sawara,
Here in our sunset isle,
Sawara, Sawara, Sawara,
Look on me once, and smile ;
Face I have watched so long for,
Hands I have longed to hold,
Sawara, Sawara, Sawara,
Why is your heart so cold ?"

Surely, he thought, I have painted
Nothing so fair as this
Moonlit almond blossom
Sweet to fold and kiss. . . .
"Kimi," he said, "I am wedded !
Hush, for it could not be !"
"Kiss me one kiss," she whispered,
"Me also, even me."

Small and terribly drifting
Backward, her sad white face
Lifted up to Sawara
Once, in that lonely place,
White as a drifting blossom
Under his wondering eyes,
Slowly he gathered and held her
Under the drifting skies.

"Others are happy," she whispered,
"Maidens and men I have seen :
Be happy, be happy, Sawara !
The other—shall be—your queen !
Kiss me one kiss for parting."
Trembling she lifted her head,
Then like a broken blossom
It fell on his arm. She was dead.

VIII.

Much impressed, Sawara straigh
(Though the hour was growing late)
Made a sketch of Kimi lying
By the lonely, sighing sea,
Brought it back to Tenko.

Tenko looked it over crying
 (Under the silvery willow-tree).
"You have burst the golden gate !
You have conquered Time and Fate !
Hokusai is not so great !
 This is art," said Tenko !

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND.

I.

I REMEMBER—

a breath, a breath
Blown thro' the rosy gates of birth,
A morning freshness not of the earth
But cool and strange and lovely as death
In Paradise, in Paradise,
When, all to suffer the old sweet pain
Closing his immortal eyes
Wonder-wild an angel lies
With wings of rainbow-tinctured grain
Withering till—ah, wonder-wild,
Here on the dawning earth again
He wakes, a little child.

II.

I remember—

a gleam, a gleam
Of sparkling waves and warm blue sky
Far away and long ago,
Or ever I knew that youth could die ;
And out of the dawn, the dawn, the dawn,
Into the unknown life we sailed
As out of sleep into a dream,
And, as with elfin cables drawn
In dusk of purple over the glowing
Wrinkled measureless emerald sea,
The light cloud shadows larger far
Than the sweet shapes which drew them on,
Fairly delicate shadows flowing
Between us and the morning star
Chased us all a summer's day,
And our sail like a dew-lit blossom shone
Till, over a rainbow haze of spray
That arched a reef of surf like snow
—Far away and long ago—
We saw the sky-line rosily engrailed
With tufted peaks above a smooth lagoon
Which growing, growing, growing as we sailed
Curved all around them like a crescent moon ;

And then we saw the purple-shadowed creeks,
The feathery palms, the gleaming golden streaks
Of sand, and nearer yet, like jewels of fire
Streaming between the boughs, or floating higher
Like tiny sunset-clouds in noon-day skies,
The birds of Paradise.

III.

The island floated in the air,
Its image floated in the sea :
Which was the shadow? Both were fair :
Like sister souls they seemed to be ;
And one was dreaming and asleep,
And one bent down from Paradise
To kiss with radiance in the deep
The darkling lips and eyes.

And, mingling softly in their dreams,
That holy kiss of sea and sky
Transfused the shadows and the gleams
Of Time and of Eternity :
The dusky face looked up and gave
To heaven its golden shadowed calm ;
The face of light fulfilled the wave
With blissful wings and fans of palm.

Above, the tufted rosy peaks
That melted in the warm blue skies,
Below, the purple-shadowed creeks
That glassed the birds of Paradise—
A bridal knot, it hung in heaven ;
And, all around, the still lagoon
From bloom of dawn to blush of even
Curved like a crescent moon.

And there we wandered evermore
Thro' boyhood's everlasting years,
Listening the murmur of the shore
As one that lifts a shell and hears
The murmur of forgotten seas
Around some lost Broceliande,
The sigh of sweet Eternities
That turn the world to fairy-land,

That turned our isle to a single pearl
Glowing in measureless waves of wine !
Above, below, the clouds would curl,
Above, below, the stars would shine
In sky and sea. We hung in heaven !
Time and space were but elfin-sweet
Rock-bound pools for the dawn and even
To wade with their rosy feet.

Our pirate cavern faced the West :

We closed its door with screens of palm,
While some went out to seek the nest

Wherein the Phoenix, breathing balm,
Burns and dies to live for ever

(How should we dream we lived to die?)
And some would fish in the purple river
That thro' the hills brought down the sky.

And some would dive in the lagoon

Like sunbeams, and all round our isle
Swim thro' the lovely crescent moon,

Glimpsing, for breathless mile on mile,
The wild sea-woods that bloomed below,

The rainbow fish, the coral cave
Where vanishing swift as melting snow
A mermaid's arm would wave.

Then, dashing shoreward thro' the spray
On sun-lit sands they cast them down,
Or in the white sea-daisies lay

With sun-stained bodies rosy-brown,
Content to watch the foam-bows flee

Across the shelving reefs and bars,
With wild eyes gazing out to sea
Like happy haunted stars.

IV.

And O, the wild sea-maiden
Drifting through the starlit air,
With white arms blossom-laden
And the sea-scents in her hair :
Sometimes we heard her singing
The midnight forest through,
Or saw a soft hand flinging
Blossoms drenched with starry dew
Into the dreaming purple cave ;
And, sometimes, far and far away
Beheld across the glooming wave
Beyond the dark lagoon,
Beyond the silvery foaming bar,
The black bright rock whereon she lay
Like a honey-coloured star
Singing to the breathless moon,
Singing in the silent night
Till the stars for sheer delight
Closed their eyes, and drowsy birds
On the midmost forest spray
Took their heads from out their wings,
Thinking—it is Ariel sings
And we must catch the witching words
And sing them o'er by day.

V.

And then, there came a breath, a breath
Cool and strange and dark as death,
A stealing shadow, not of the earth
But fresh and wonder-wild as birth.
I know not when the hour began
That changed the child's heart in the man,
Or when the colours began to wane,
But all our roseate island lay
Stricken, as when an angel dies
With wings of rainbow-tinctured grain
Withering, and his radiant eyes
Closing. Pitiless walls of gray
Gathered around us, a growing tomb
From which it seemed not death or doom
Could roll the stone away.

VI.

Yet—I remember—

a gleam, a gleam,
(Or ever I dreamed that youth could die!)
Of sparkling waves and warm blue sky
As out of sleep into a dream,

Wonder-wild for the old sweet pain,
We sailed into that unknown sea
Through the gates of Eternity.

Peacefully close your mortal eyes
For ye shall wake to it again
In Paradise, in Paradise.

UNITY.

I.

HEART of my heart, the world is young ;
Love lies hidden in every rose !
Every song that the skylark sung
Once, we thought, must come to a close :
Now we know the spirit of song,
Song that is merged in the chant of the whole,
Hand in hand as we wander along,
What should we doubt of the years that roll ?

II.

Heart of my heart, we cannot die !
Love triumphant in flower and tree,
Every life that laughs at the sky
Tells us nothing can cease to be :

One, we are one with a song to-day,
One with the clover that scents the wold,
One with the Unknown, far away,
One with the stars, when earth grows old.

III.

Heart of my heart, we are one with the wind,
One with the clouds that are whirled o'er the lea,
One in many, O broken and blind,
One as the waves are at one with the sea !
Ay ! when life seems scattered apart,
Darkens, ends as a tale that is told,
One, we are one, O heart of my heart,
One, still one, while the world grows old.

THE HILL-FLOWER.

*It is my faith that every flower
 Enjoys the air it breathes—*
 So was it sung one golden hour
 Among the woodbine wreaths ;
 And yet, though wet with living dew,
 The song seemed far more sweet than true.

Blind creatures of the sun and air
 I dreamed it but a dream
 That, like Narcissus, would confer
 With self in every stream,
 And to the leaves and boughs impart
 The tremors of a human heart.

To-day a golden pinion stirred
 The world's Bethesda pool,
 And I believed the song I heard
 Nor put my heart to school ;
 And through the rainbows of the dream
 I saw the gates of Eden gleam.

The rain had ceased. The great hills rolled
In silence to the deep :
The gorse in waves of green and gold
Perfumed their lonely sleep ;
And, at my feet, one elfin flower
Drooped, blind with glories of the shower.

I stooped—a giant from the sky—
Above its piteous shield,
And, suddenly, the dream went by,
And there—was heaven revealed !
I stooped to pluck it ; but my hand
Paused, mid-way, o'er its fairyland.

Not of mine own was that strange voice,
“ Pluck—tear a star from heaven ! ”
Mine only was the awful choice
To scoff and be forgiven
Or hear the very grass I trod
Whispering the gentle thoughts of God.

I know not if the hill-flower's place
Beneath that mighty sky,
Its lonely and aspiring grace
Its beauty born to die
Touched me, I know it seemed to be
Cherished by all Eternity.

Man, doomed to crush at every stride
A hundred lives like this
Which by their weakness were allied,
If by naught else, to his,
Can only for a flash discern
What passion through the whole doth yearn.

Not into words can I distil
The pity or the pain
Which hallowing all that lonely hill
Cried out "refrain, refrain,"
Then breathed from earth and sky and sea,
Herein you did it unto Me.

Somewhile that hill was heaven's own breast,
The flower its joy and grief,
Hugged close and fostered and caressed
In every brief bright leaf :
And, ere I went thro' sun and dew,
I leant and gently touched it, too.

ACTÆON.

"Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed
And bound his forehead with Proserpine's hair."

—BROWNING (*Pauline*).

I.

*LIGHT of beauty, O, "perfect in whiteness,"
Softly suffused thro' the world's dark shrouds,
Kindling them all as they pass by thy brightness,—
Hills, men, cities,—a pageant of clouds,
Thou to whom Life and Time surrender
All earth's forms as to heaven's deep care,
Who shall pierce to thy naked splendour,
Bind his brows with thy hair?*

II.

Swift thro' the sprays when Spring grew bolder
Young Actæon swept to the chase!
Golden the fawn-skin, back from the shoulder
Flowing, set free the limbs' lithe grace,

Muscles of satin that rippled like sunny
Streams,—a hunter, a young athlete,
Scattering dews and crushing out honey
Under his sandalled feet.

III.

Sunset softened the crags of the mountain,
Silence melted the hunter's heart,
Only the sob of a falling fountain
Pulsed in a deep ravine apart :
All the forest seemed waiting breathless,
Eager to whisper the dying day
Some rich word that should utter the deathless
Secret of youth and May.

IV.

Softlier now and on tiptoe lightly
Down the ravine that his keen eye scanned,
Fair as the sun-god, brandishing brightly
One sharp spear of the moon in his hand,
Stole he! Ah, did the oak-wood ponder
Youth's glad dream in its heart of gloom?
Dryad or fawn was it started yonder?
Ah, what whisper of doom?

V.

Gold, thro' the fringe of the ferns that listened,
Shone the soul of the wood's deep dream,
One bright glade and a pool that glistened
Full in the face of the sun's last gleam,—
Gold in the heart of a violet dingle !
Young Actæon, beware ! beware !
Who shall track, while the pulses tingle,
Spring to her woodland lair ?

VI.

See, at his feet, what mystical quiver,
Maiden's girdle and robe of snow,
Tossed aside by the green glen-river
Ere she bathed in the pool below ?
All the fragrance of April meets him
Full in the face with its young sweet breath ;
Yet, as he steals to the glade, there greets him—
Hush, what whisper of death ?

VII.

Lo, in the violets, lazily dreaming,
Young Diana, the huntress, lies :
One white side thro' the violets gleaming
Heaves and sinks with her golden sighs,

One white breast like a diamond crownet
Couched in a velvet casket glows,
One white arm, tho' the violets drown it,
Thrills their purple with rose.

VIII.

Buried in fragrance, the half-moon flashes,
Beautiful, clouded, from head to heel :
One white foot in the warm wave splashes,
Violets tremble and half reveal,
Half conceal, as they kiss, the slender
Slope and curve of her sleeping limbs :
Violets bury one half the splendour ;
Still, as thro' heaven, she swims.

IX.

Cold as the white rose waking at daybreak
Lifts the light of her lovely face,
Poised on an arm she watches the spray break
Over the slim white ankle's grace,
Watches the wave that sleeplessly tosses
Kissing the pure foot's pink sea-shells,
Watches the long-leaved heaven-dark mosses
Drowning their star-bright bells.

X.

Swift as the Spring where the South has brightened
Earth with bloom in one passionate night,
Swift as the violet heavens had lightened,
Swift to perfection, blinding, white,
Dian arose : and Actæon saw her,
Only he since the world began !
Only in dreams could Endymion draw her
Down to the heart of man.

XI.

Fair as the dawn upon Himalaya
Anger flashed from her cheek's pure rose,
Alpine peaks at the passage of Maia
Flushed not fair as her 'breasts' white snows.
Ah, fair form of the heaven's completeness,
Who shall sing thee or who shall say
Whence that "high perfection of sweetness,"
Perfect to save or slay ?

XII.

*Perfect in beauty, beauty the portal
Here on earth to the world's deep shrine,
Beauty hidden in all things mortal,
Who shall mingle his eyes with thine ?*

*Thou, to whom Life and Death surrender
All earth's forms as to heaven's deep care,
Who shall pierce to thy naked splendour,
Bind his brows with thy hair?*

XIII.

*Beauty, perfect in blinding whiteness,
Softly suffused thro' the world's dark shrouds,
Kindling them all as they pass by her brightness,—
Hills, men, cities,—a pageant of clouds,
She, the unchanging, shepherds their changes,
Bids them mingle and form and flow,
Flowers and flocks and the great hill-ranges
Follow her cry and go.*

XIV.

Swift as the sweet June lightning flashes,
Down she stoops to the purpling pool,
Sudden and swift her white hand dashes
Rainbow mists in his eyes! "Ah, fool!
Hunter," she cries to the young Actæon,
"Change to the hunted, rise and fly,
Swift ere the wild pack utter its pæan,
Swift for thy hounds draw nigh!"

XV.

Lo, as he trembles, the greenwood branches
Dusk his brows with their antlered pride !
Lo, as a stag thrown back on its haunches
Quivers, with velvet nostrils wide,
Lo, he changes ! The soft fur darkens
Down to the fetlock's lifted fear !—
Hounds are baying !—he snuffs and hearkens,
“ Fly, for the stag is here ! ”

XVI.

Swift he leapt thro' the ferns, Actæon,
Young Actæon, the lordly stag :
Full and mellow the deep-mouthed pæan
Swelled behind him from crag to crag :
Well he remembered that sweet throat leading,
Wild with terror he raced and strained,
Swept thro' the thorns with soft flanks bleeding ;
Ever they gained and gained !

XVII.

Death, like a darkling huntsman holloed—
Swift, Actæon !—desire and shame
Leading the pack of the passions followed,
Red jaws frothing with white-hot flame,

Volleying out of the glen, they leapt up
Snapping, fell short of the foam-flecked thighs,
Inch by terrible inch they crept up,
Shadows with blood-shot eyes.

XVIII.

Still with his great heart bursting asunder,
Still thro' the night he struggled and bled ;
Suddenly round him the pack's low thunder
Surged, the hounds that his own hand fed
Fastened in his throat, with red jaws drinking
Deep !—for a moment his antlered pride
Soared o'er their passionate seas, then, sinking,
Fell for the fangs to divide.

XIX.

*Light of beauty, O, perfect in whiteness,
Softly suffused thro' the years' dark veils,
Kindling them all as they pass by her brightness,
Filling our hearts with her old-world tales,
She, the unchanging, shepherds their changes,
Bids them mingle and form and flow,
Flowers and flocks and the great hill-ranges
Follow her cry and go.*

XX.

Still, in the violets, lazily dreaming
Young Diana, the huntress, lies :
One white side thro' the violets gleaming
Heaves and sinks with her golden sighs ;
One white breast like a diamond crownnet
Couched in a velvet casket glows,
One white arm, tho' the violets drown it,
Thrills their purple with rose.

LUCIFER'S FEAST.

(A EUROPEAN NIGHTMARE.)

To celebrate the ascent of man, one gorgeous night
 Lucifer gave a feast.

Its world-bewildering light
 Danced in Belshazzar's tomb, and the old kings dead
 and gone
 Felt their dust creep to jewels in crumbling Babylon.

Two nations were His guests—the top and flower of
 Time,
 The fore-front of an age which now had learned to
 climb
 The slopes where Newton knelt, the heights that Shake-
 speare trod,
 The mountains whence Beethoven rolled the voice of
 God.

Lucifer's feasting-lamps were like the morning stars,
But at the board-head shone the blood-red lamp of
Mars.

League upon glittering league, white front and flabby
face

Bent o'er the groaning board. Twelve brave men
droned the grace;

But with instinctive tact, in courtesy to their Host,
Omitted God the Son and God the Holy Ghost,
And to the God of Battles raised their humble prayers.

Then, then, like thunder, all the guests drew up their
chairs.

By each a drinking-cup, yellow, almost, as gold,
(*The blue eye-sockets gave the thumbs a good firm hold*)
Adorned the flowery board. Could even brave men
shrink?

Why if the cups *were* skulls, they had red wine to
drink?

And had not each a napkin, white and peaked and
proud,

Waiting to wipe his mouth? A napkin? Nay, a
shroud!

This was a giants' feast, on hell's imperial scale.

The blades glistened.

The shrouds—O, in one snowy gale,
The pink hands fluttered them out, and spread them on
their knees.

Who knew what gout's might drop, what filthy flakes of
grease,

Now that o'er every shoulder, through the coiling steam,
Inhuman faces peered, with wolfish eyes a-gleam,
And grey-faced vampire Lusts that whinneyed in each
ear

Hints of the hideous courses?

None may name them here?

None? And we may not see! The distant cauldrons
cloak

The lava-coloured plains with clouds of umber smoke.

Nay, by that shrapnel-light, by those wild shooting
stars

That rip the clouds away with fiercer fire than Mars,
They are painted sharp as death. If these can eat and
drink

Chatter and laugh and rattle their knives, why should
we shrink

From empty names? We know those ghastly gleams
are true:

Why should Christ cry again—*They know not what
they do?*

They, heirs of all the ages, sons of Shakespeare's land,
They, brothers of Beethoven, smiling, cultured, bland,
Whisper with sidling heads to ghouls with bloody lips.

Each takes upon his plate a small round thing that drips
And quivers, a child's heart.

Miles on miles

The glittering table bends o'er that first course, and
smiles ;

For, through the wreaths of smoke, the grey Lusts bear
aloft

The second course, on leaden chargers, large and soft,
Bodies of women, steaming in an opal mist,
Red-branded here and there where vampire-teeth have
kissed,

But white as pig's flesh, newly killed, and cleanly dressed,
A lemon in each mouth and roses round each breast,
Emblems to show how deeply, sweetly satisfied,
The breasts, the lips, can sleep, whose children fought
and died

For — what? For country? God, once more Thy
shrapnel-light !

Let those dark slaughter-houses burst upon our sight,
These kitchens are too clean, too near the tiring room !
Let Thy white shrapnel rend those filthier veils of gloom,

Rip the last fogs away and strip the foul thing bare!
One lightning - picture — see — yon bayonet-bristling
square

Mown down, mown down, mown down, wild swathes of
crimson wheat,

The white-eyed charge, the blast, the terrible retreat,
The blood-greased wheels of cannon thundering into line
O'er that red writhe of pain, rent groin and shattered
spine,

The moaning faceless face that kissed its child last night,
The raw pulp of the heart that beat for love's delight,
The heap of twisting bodies, clotted and congealed
In one red huddle of anguish on the loathsome field,
The seas of obscene slaughter spewing their blood-red
yeast,

Multitudes pouring out their entrails for the feast,
Knowing not why, but dying, they think, for some
high cause,

Dying for "hearth and home," their flags, their creeds,
their laws.

Ask of the Bulls and Bears, ask if they understand
How both great grappling armies bleed for their own
land;

For in that faith they die! These hoodwinked thou-
sands die

Simply as heroes, gulled by hell's profoundest lie.

Who keeps the slaughter-house? Not these, not these
who gain

Nought but the sergeant's shilling and the homeless
pain!

Who pulls the ropes? Not these, who buy their crust
of bread

With the salt sweat of labour! These but bury their
dead

Then sweat again for food!

Christ, is the hour not come,
To send forth one great voice and strike this dark hell
dumb,

A voice to out-crash the cannon, one united cry
To sweep these wild-beast standards down that stain
the sky,

To hurl these Lions and Bears and Eagles to their
doom,

One voice, one heart, one soul, one fire that shall
consume.

The last red reeking shreds that flicker against the blast
And purge the Augean stalls we call "our glorious past"!
One voice from dawn and sunset, one almighty voice,
Full-throated as the sea—ye sons o' the earth, rejoice!
Beneath the all-loving sky, confederate kings ye stand,
Fling open wide the gates o' the world-wide Fatherland.

.

Poor fools, we dare not dream it! We that pule and
whine

Of art and science, we, whose great souls leave no shrine
Unshattered, we that climb the Sinai Shakespeare trod,
The Olivets where Beethoven walked and talked with
God,

We that have weighed the stars and reined the
lightning, we

That stare thro' heaven and plant our footsteps in the
sea,

We whose great souls have risen so far above the
creeds

That we can jest at Christ and leave Him where He
bleeds,

A legend of the dark, a tale so false or true

That howsoe'er we jest at Him, the jest sounds new.

(Our weariest dinner-tables never tire of that!

Let the clown sport with Christ, never the jest falls
flat!)

Poor fools, we dare not dream a dream so strange, so
great,

As on this ball of dust to found one "world-wide state,"

To float one common flag above our little lands,

And ere our little sun grows cold to clasp our hands

In friendship for a moment!

.

Hark, the violins
Are swooning through the mist. The great blue band
begins,
Playing, in dainty scorn, a hymn we used to know,
How long was it, ten thousand thousand years ago?

*There is a green hill far away
Beside a City wall!—*
And O, the music swung a-stray
With a solemn dying fall;
For it was a pleasant jest to play
Hymns in the Devil's Hall.

And yet, and yet, if aught be true,
This dream we left behind,
This childish Christ, be-mocked anew
To please the men of mind,
Yet hung so far beyond the flight
Of our most lofty thought
That—Lucifer laughed *at* us that night,
Not *with* us, as he ought.

Beneath the blood-red lamp of Mars,
Cloaked with a scarlet cloud
He gazed along the line of stars
Above the guzzling crowd:

Sinister, thunder-scarred, he raised
His great world-wandering eyes,
And on some distant vision gazed
Beyond our cloudy skies.

*"Poor bats," he sneered, "their jungle-dark
Civilisation's noon !
Poor wolves, that hunt in packs and bark
Beneath the grinning moon ;
Poor fools, that cast the cross away,
Before they break the sword ;
Poor sots, who take the night for day ;
Have mercy on me, Lord.*

*Beyond their wisdom's deepest skies
I see Thee hanging yet,
The love still hungering in Thine eyes,
Thy plaited crown still wet !
Thine arms outstretched to fold them all
Beneath Thy sheltering breast ;
But—since they will not hear Thy call,
Lord, I forbear to jest.*

*Lord, I forbear ! The day I fell
I fell at least thro' pride !
Rather than these should share my hell
Take me, thou Crucified !*

*O, let me share Thy cross of grief,
And let me work Thy will,
As morning star, or dying thief,
Thy fallen angel still.*

*Lord, I forbear ! For Thee, at least,
In pain so like to mine,
The mighty meaning of their feast
Is plain as bread and wine :
O, smile once more, far off, alone !
Since these nor hear nor see,
From my deep hell, so like Thine own,
Lord Christ, I pity Thee.*

Yet once again, he thought, they shall be fully tried,
If they be devils or fools too light for hell's deep pride.

The champ of teeth was over, and the reeking room
Gaped for the speeches now. Across the sulphurous
fume

Lucifer gave a sign. The guests stood thundering up !
"Gentlemen, charge your glasses !"

Every yellow cup
Frothed with the crimson blood. They brandished
them on high !

"Gentlemen, drink to those who fight and know not
why !"

And in the bubbling blood each nose was buried deep.

"Gentlemen, drink to those who sowed that we might
reap !

Drink to the pomp, pride, circumstance, of glorious
war,

The grand self-sacrifice that made us what we are !

And drink to the peace-lovers who believe that peace

Is War, red, bloody War ; for War can never cease

Unless we drain the veins of peace to fatten WAR !

Gentlemen, drink to the brains that made us what we
are !

Drink to self-sacrifice that helps us all to shake

The world with tramp of armies. Germany, awake !

England, awake ! Shakespeare's, Beethoven's Fatherland,

Are you not both aware, do you not understand,

Self-sacrifice is competition ? It is the law

Of Life, and so, though both of you are wholly right,

Self-sacrifice requires that both of you should fight."

And "Hoch ! hoch ! hoch !" they cried ; and "Hip,
hip, hip, Hurrah !"

This raised the gorge of Lucifer. With one deep
"Bah,"

Above those croaking toads he towered like Gabriel ;

Then straightway left the table and went home to hell.

VETERANS.

(WRITTEN FOR THE RELIEF FUND OF THE
CRIMEAN VETERANS.)

I.

WHEN the last charge sounds
And the battle thunders o'er the plain,
Thunders o'er the trenches where the red streams flow,
Will it not be well with us,
Veterans, veterans,
If, beneath your torn old flag, we burst upon the foe ?

II.

When the last post sounds
And the night is on the battle-field,
Night and rest at last from all the tumult of our wars,
Will it not be well with us,
Veterans, veterans,
If, with duty done like yours, we lie beneath the stars ?

III.

When the great reveille sounds

For the terrible last Sabaoth,

All the legions of the dead shall hear the trumpet ring !

Will it not be well with us,

Veterans, veterans,

If, beneath your torn old flag, we rise to meet our king ?

PROLOGUE
TO THE AMERICAN EDITION OF 'DRAKE :
AN ENGLISH EPIC.'

I.

ENGLAND, my mother,
Lift to my western sweetheart
One full cup of English mead, breathing of the May !
Pledge the May-flower in her face that you and, ah,
none other,
Sent her from the mother-land,
Across the dashing spray.

II.

Hers and yours the story ;
Think of it, O, think of it—
That immortal dream when El Dorado flushed the skies !
Fill the beaker full and drink to Drake's undying
glory,
Yours and hers (O, drink of it !)
The dream that never dies.

III.

Yours and hers the free-men
Who scanned the stars and westward sung
When a king commanded and the Atlantic thundered
 "Nay!"
Hers as yours the pride is, for Drake our first of
 seamen
First upon his bowsprit hung
That bunch of English May.

IV.

Pledge her deep, my mother;
Through her veins thy life-stream runs!
Spare a thought, too, sweetheart, for my mother o'er
 the sea!
Younger eyes are yours; but ah, those old eyes and
 none other
Once bedewed the May-flower, once
As yours were clear and free.

V.

Once! Nay, now as ever
 Beats within her ancient heart
 All the faith that took you forth to seek your heaven
 alone:
 Shadows² come and go, but let no shade of doubt
 dissever
 Cloak or cloud or keep apart
 Two souls whose prayer is one.

VI.

Sweetheart, ah, be tender—
 Tender with her prayer to-night!
 Such a goal might yet be ours!—the battle-flags be furled,
 All the wars of earth be crushed, if only now your
 slender
 Hand should grasp her gnarled old hand
 And federate the world.

VII.

Foolish it may seem, sweet !

Still the battle-thunder lours :

Darker loom the Dreadnoughts as old Europe goes
her way !

Yet your hand, your hand, has power to crush that
evil dream, sweet ;

You, with younger eyes than ours

And brows of English May.

VIII.

If a singer cherishes

Idle dreams or idle words

You shall judge—and you'll forgive ; for, far away or
nigh,

Still abides that Vision without which a people perishes :

Love will strike the atoning chords !

Hark—there comes a cry !

IX.

Over all this earth, sweet,
The poor and weak look up to you—
Lift their burdened shoulders, stretch their fettered
hands in prayer:
You with gentle hands can bring the golden dream
to birth, sweet,
While I lift this cup to you
And wonder—will she care?

X.

Kindle, eyes, and beat, heart!
Hold the brimming beaker up!
• All the May is burgeoning from East to golden West!
England, my mother, greet America, my sweetheart;
—Ah, but ere I drained the cup
I found her on your breast.

THE QUEST RENEWED.

It is too soon, too soon, though time be brief,
Quite to forswear thy quest,
O Light, whose farewell dyes the falling leaf,
Fades thro' the fading West.

Thou'rt flown too soon! I stretch my hands out still,
O, Light of Life, to Thee,
Who leav'st an Olivet in each far blue hill,
A sorrow on every sea.

It is too soon, here while the loud world roars
For wealth and power and fame,
Too soon quite to forget those other shores
Afar, from whence I came ;

Too soon even to forget the first dear dream
Dreamed far away, when tears could freely flow ;
And life seemed infinite, as that sky's great gleam
Deepened, to which I go,

Too soon even to forget the fluttering fire
And those old books beside the friendly hearth,
When time seemed endless as my own desire,
And angels walked our earth ;

Too soon quite to forget amid the throng
What once the silent hills, the sounding beach
Taught me—where singing was the prize of song,
And heaven within my reach.

It is too soon amid the cynic sneers,
The sophist smiles, the greedy mouths and hands,
Quite to forget the light of those dead years
And my lost mountain-lands ;

Too soon to lose that everlasting hope
(For so it seemed) of youth in love's pure reign,
Though while I linger on this darkening slope
Nought seems quite worth the pain.

It is too soon for me to break that trust,
O, Light of Light, flown far past sun and moon,
Burn back thro' this dark panoply of dust ;
Or let me follow—soon.

6

THE LIGHTS OF HOME.

PILOT, how far from home?—

Not far, not far to-night,

A flight of spray, a sea-bird's flight,

A flight of tossing foam,

And then the lights of home!—

And, yet again, how far?

Seems you the way so brief?

Those lights beyond the roaring reef

Were lights of moon and star,

Far, far, none knows how far!

Pilot, how far from home?—

The great stars pass away

Before Him as a flight of spray,

Moons as a flight of foam!

I see the lights of home.

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“The pale princess from some grey wizard’s tower
Midmost the deep sigh of enchanted woods
Looks for the starry flash of her knight’s shield”;

or harsh and heroic—

“Whistle in hand he watched, his boat well ready,
His men low-crouched around him, swarthy faces
Grim-chinned upon the taffrail, muttering oaths
That trampled down the fear i’ their bristly throats,
While at their sides a dreadful hint of steel
Lent stray gleams to the stars.”

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“ Desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,”

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